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The Vernaculars of Communism

Language, ideology and power in the
Soviet Union and Eastern Europe

Edited by
Petre Petrov and
Lara Ryazanova-Clarke



The Vernaculars of Communism

The political revolutions which established state socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were accompanied by revolutions in the word, as the Communist project implied not only remaking the world but also renaming it. As new institutions, social roles, rituals and behaviours emerged, so did language practices that designated, articulated and performed these phenomena. This book examines the use of communist language in the Stalinist and post-Stalinist periods. It goes beyond characterizing this linguistic variety as crude ‘new-speak’, showing how official language was much more complex – the medium through which important political-ideological messages were elaborated, transmitted and also contested, revealing contradictions, discursive cleavages and performative variations. The book examines the subject comparatively across a range of East European countries besides the Soviet Union, and draws on perspectives from a range of scholarly disciplines – sociolinguistics, anthropology, literary and cultural studies, historiography and translation studies.

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Introduction

Lara Ryazanova-Clarke and Petre Petrov

The ascendancy of language

The twentieth century was the ‘linguistic’ one, so dubbed by those who appreciated the momentous epistemological significance that the paradigm of language had acquired in the humanities. ‘Language as a model! To rethink everything through once again in terms of linguistics!’ (Jameson 1972: ix). It was not just devout structuralists who experienced this enthusiasm. ‘Signifier’ and ‘signified’, ‘metaphor’ and ‘metonymy’, ‘discourse’, ‘code’, ‘enunciation’, *écriture* – these became the common terms of conversation in the humanities. Understood most broadly, not just as a verbal medium but as the name of any symbolic activity, language during the last hundred years became an all-powerful model that did not so much explain the world of man, but framed the very question of what man is (or, even, *whether* man is), as well as the question of what it is to have a ‘world’. But the appellation ‘linguistic century’ would have been well deserved for yet another reason. Quite apart from the prominence of language as a fact of knowledge, quite apart from any and all reflections upon the linguistic, the very mode of existence of language, its factual being in the world, acquired unprecedented weight. In *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault traced the changing status of signification from the unproblematic transparency of the Classical period, through ever-increasing density, to the language-cum-thing of modernist literature: ‘an independent form, difficult to access, folded back upon the enigma of its own origin and existing wholly in reference to the pure act of writing’ (Foucault 1994: 300). This ability of the verbal medium to cease being an easy conductor of meaning and present itself, instead, as something material and self-subsistent, was truly showcased only since the beginning of the twentieth century. On this same ability the Russian Formalists staked their definition of the literary. Literature could be found in many shapes and flavours, but its essence, the *literariness* of literature, was, according to Roman Jakobson (1921a), something definite and definable: a special use of language, one that calls attention to itself, interposing its roughened materiality between the reader and the prospect of facile comprehension. After the Formalists, this opaque, autonomous being of language became a common place in understanding the modernist movement.

But it wasn't just the language of modernism that displayed such density and enchanted autonomy. Like radical poetics, radical politics in the early part of the twentieth century abjured habituated patterns of communication and installed new, unfamiliar idioms in their stead. At the very same time in which the Formalists produced their most substantial work, a social revolution was producing a veritable revolution in language. As new ideological meanings and old mentalities clashed, the effect was not all that different from the various modernist devices of incongruity. Some among the Formalists took note, as did a number of contemporary writers – Isaac Babel, Mikhail Zoshchenko, Evgenii Zamiatin and Andrei Platonov foremost among them – who exploited for artistic purposes the defamiliarizing effects of the nascent *lingua Sovietica*. The victorious proletarian revolution implied not only the project of remaking the world, but also of renaming it. The practical-political and linguistic tasks went hand in hand; as new institutions, social roles, rituals and behaviours came into being, so did new words to name these phenomena. The linguistic upheaval, however, was much more than a matter of novelty of language forms. When the ideological creed of yesterday's small, underground party was taken out of its confined context, broadcast to the millions and adapted to the countless mundane affairs of government and social life, it increased enormously the sheer volume and breadth of linguistic intercourse between the state and its subjects, instantiated novel contexts and forms of verbal interaction, engendered new discursive genres and skills. In short, a whole new culture of communication came into existence whose initial effect was to make even common language 'strange', thing-like. This culture was sufficiently different from the language of social intercourse in pre-revolutionary Russia to justify one speaking of a 'language of communism' and isolating it as an object of study – an object defined as much by its internal constitution as by its history.

Historical trajectories

It has been argued that the development of communist language had occurred in at least two major phases (Gorham 2003; Ryazanova-Clarke 2008a), which, as Lara Ryazanova-Clarke has shown (2008a and this volume), may, in general terms, be explained with the help of Pierre Bourdieu's (1991) theory of the dynamics of linguistic stability and change. Bourdieu suggests that in times of social turmoil the established discursive order, which had previously defined the status quo, collapses while heterodoxy gains in symbolic capital. In the Russian context, the stage of heterodoxy was recorded in the early post-revolutionary period, when the language of Bolshevism was establishing itself through the attribution of a high symbolic value to an idiom marked by a variety of styles, with a special valorization of the expression associated with peasant and illiterate masses, and of the features of spontaneity, orality and linguistic innovation (Murashov 2000; Gorham 2003; Lunde and Roesen 2006). This period corresponds to what Vladimir Papernyi (1996) has termed Culture One, that is, the culture of the polyphonic revolutionary avant-garde, unfinalized, future-oriented

and open to experimentation. The second phase – Culture Two, accounts for the period of the etatization of communism and the ascendance of Stalinism. It reformatted and recoded the first type of linguistic culture and produced a different type of communist language characterized, in Bourdieu's terms, by the establishment of the new doxa that 'restores the simplicity and transparency of common sense, the feeling of obviousness and necessity' (Bourdieu 1991: 131). The new Soviet doxa, which annunciated yet again the 'adherence to the established order' (ibid.: 125), manifested itself in the fact that the number of authorized styles diminished and the discourse written and spoken in the specific dialect – the communist linguistic variety – became dominant, leading to the unification of the linguistic market. Michael Gorham in his thoughtful investigation of language culture after the Bolshevik revolution shows how the colourful and 'often mystifying babble' of the 1920s Bolshevism had yielded to the 'sacred tongue of the Soviet party-state, bestowing power and authority upon those members willing to espouse the state's central value system' (2003: 121). The communist variety dominated public discourses across the socialist states up to the arrival of Gorbachev's glasnost which began to break down communist truths, engendering the re-evaluation of the language that had articulated them (Ryazanova-Clarke and Wade 1999; Ryazanova-Clarke 2008b).

In contrast to the early post-revolutionary language, discourses produced in the later, more codified language of socialism displayed starkly different characteristics, namely, the routinization, formularization and bureaucratization of language practices. The communist variety not only aligned itself with the doctrines of the party-state and became the common idiom of authoritative ideological texts such as decrees, Party documents, official speeches, slogans and so on. Instrumental in legitimizing and perpetuating the political system, it found its way into every modicum of the social and cultural fabric of Soviet life; internalized by speakers living in and adjusting to the communist regimes, it became an integral component of their subjectivity, reflection and articulation (Kotkin 1995; Hellbeck 2000, 2006). As Johan Hellbeck put it, 'The Bolsheviks were verbal imperialists [...] [They] sought to impart consciousness in great measure by linguistic means: through practices of reading, writing, and oral and written self-presentation' (2006: 20).

When, in the aftermath of the Second World War, state socialism became an international phenomenon, so did its official language. The newly Sovietized countries of Central and Eastern Europe adopted it along with other irrefusable gifts from the Stalinist metropolis: planned economy, forced industrialization and collectivization, rigid ideological control, the stark polarization of public life into friends and enemies of the people, and so on. Here too, as three decades earlier in the Soviet Union, a dramatic clash occurred between this suddenly and aggressively ascendant idiom of political discourse and the native linguo-cultural traditions. In one obvious respect the conflict was more dramatic than what had taken place in Russia three decades earlier. It is not only that the new language was marked as a political and ideological artefact; it was also stamped as an import from the 'fraternal socialist state', a text in translation. This made it

doubly foreign to traditional cultural elites in these countries, especially where – as in the case of Poland – these elites had long-standing historical reasons to distrust Russians bearing gifts. In the Soviet Union of the 1920s, the language of communism was very much a work in progress (as were its ideological determinants). By contrast, the societies of Central and Eastern Europe were confronted with a linguistic paradigm at an advanced stage of the ideologically guided codification. All of this is to say that an intriguing paradox characterizes the early life of the communist lingua franca beyond the borders of the Soviet Union: for many of the new socialist subjects it was, at the same time, something novel and stale, unfamiliar and canonized, strange but predictable.

The scholarly tradition

The study of culture during the period of socialism in the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc has been increasingly gaining scholarly attention. The debate has been enriched by multiple lines of inquiry and theorization including socialist realism (Dobrenko 1997, 2001; Clark 2000; Giunter and Dobrenko 2000); the relationship between socialist cultural forms and space (Aman 1992; Dobrenko and Naiman 2003); the archaeology of Stalinist culture (Groys 2011); cultural politics (Verdery 1995); ordinary life and subjectivity (Fitzpatrick 1999; Kotkin 1995; Hellbeck 2000, 2006; Halfin 2003; Siegelbaum 2006; Fitzpatrick and Ludtke 2009; Raleigh 2012); socialist emotions (Fitzpatrick 2004; Balina and Dobrenko 2007; Plamper 2012); the semiotics of the personality cult (Plamper 2012); memory and trauma (Etkind 2013; Jones 2013); Soviet childhood (Kelly 2007; Lipovetskii 2008); Soviet cosmopolitanism (Clark 2011); and many others. Recently, a number of influential cultural-historical and anthropological studies have emerged that put the Soviet language squarely in their focus (for example, Gorham 2003; Yurchak 2006), while other seminal texts began to show consideration for involving language and discourse in the debate (for example, Kotkin 1995; Brooks 2000; Halfin 2003, 2007, 2009; Hellbeck 2000, 2006; Lovell 2013). Despite this trend, a full-scale exploration of the language of communism in its social and cultural contexts continues to be a challenge. The current volume aims to address this challenge by unpacking what has always been deemed as dull and dead ‘wooden’ language established in the Stalinist and post-Stalinist periods and by showing that in fact it was a much more complex and productive phenomenon than previously thought. The book locates the authoritative communist language to be the centre of investigation of the culture, ideology and power relations in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, interrogating it as a phenomenon, contextualizing its socio-cultural environment, as well as being contextualized by it.

Scholarship on the linguistic parameters of the Soviet regime is as old as the regime itself. Critical responses to the rise of bureaucratic styles that reflected the values of the Bolshevik regime can be traced to early post-revolution works that provided immediate instances of the new regime’s linguistic gripping (Mazon 1920; Jakobson 1921b; Kartsevskii 1923; Gus *et al.* 1926; Selishchev

2003 [1928]; Vinokur 2006 [1924]; Polivanov 1927; Volkonskii and Volkonskii 1928; Iakubinskii 1931). A spate of innovative albeit not yet fully appreciated work, in which approaches to Soviet language styles were inscribed in the early sociology of language, were added by a group of intellectuals subsumed under the collective name of Russian Formalism (including Mikhail Bakhtin, Valentin Voloshinov and Boris Lanin, as well as the already mentioned Jakobson, Lev Iakubinskii, Evgenii Polivanov and others).¹

Throughout the Soviet period the study of the communist language continued in two unconnected streams. One, inside the Soviet Union, was focused on the typology of communist communication (for example, Gus *et al.* 1926; Shafir 1927; Rozhitsyn 1928; Gofman 1932), and on the microanalysis of linguistic forms in their historical development during the Soviet period, construing the object of their study positively, within the official linguistic framework, as evidence of linguistic productivity and stabilization of the norm (for example, Panov 1962, 1968; Protchenko 1975). The other stream emerged outside the Communist bloc and engaged with the analysis of the communist language that was largely linked to the criticism of the regime and was governed by the narrative of linguistic depletion and poverty (for example, Rzhnevskii 1951; Fesenko and Fesenko 1955; Zemtsov 1985).

Scholarly interest in the communist variety received a boost towards the end of the socialist period (Essais 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984; Zaslavsky and Fabris 1982; Fidelius 1983, 1998; Karpinski 1984; Sériot 1985; Levin 1988; Thom 1989). The arrival of *perestroika* and, especially, the end of Soviet rule spurred a wave of publications in which positions from the two sides of the Iron Curtain could, for the first time, converge (Sériot 1985; Kupina 1995; Epstein 1991; Zemskaia 1996; Mokienko and Nikitina 1998; Ryazanova-Clarke and Wade 1999; Lehfeld 2001; Gorham 2003; Guseinov 2003a, 2003b; Chudakova 2007; Pöppel 2009 and others). In addition to the description and analysis of the language, now uniformly deemed corrupt, the effort was also made to capture the communist idiom that was rapidly becoming obsolete. The sense of the end of the epoch explained the copious production of dictionaries and glossaries diligently recording the linguistic shadows of the disappearing age (for example, Zemtsov 1985; Mokienko and Nikitina 1998; Guseinov 2003a; Čermák *et al.* 2010).

The debunking of communism caused the narrative about its dominant linguistic variety to broadly adopt an array of punchy, emotionally charged terms including the Orwellian ‘newspeak’ (or, its Russian and Polish respective calques *novoiaz* and *nova mowa*), and its synonyms ‘ideological language’, ‘ideologemes’, ‘officialese’, ‘bureaucratese’, ‘*langue de bois*’, calqued in Russian as *dereviannyi iazyk* (wooden language), and others. The ‘wooden language’ was primarily discussed as deficient and aberrant, as one side of a dichotomy pitted against the ‘normal’ and ‘pure’ language which had simply experienced, to use Aleksandra Vorozhbitova’s (2000) metaphor, ‘an eclipse’ (for example, Volkonskii and Volkonskii 1928; Martinez 1981; Zaslavsky and Fabris 1982; Karpinski 1984; Wierzbicka 1990; Dunn 1999). Additionally, it was a language in which

the links between the signifier and the signified were severed. For example, Michal Glowinski discussing the Polish language of the communist epoch maintained that it was unreal, ‘a quasi-language’, which had no referents in the real world (Glowinski 1991, also see Levin 1988: 78; Zemskaja 1996: 24 with regard to Russian). Moreover, argument went that communist language was flattened, simplified and uniform; as Françoise Thom put it, ‘All these stakhanovites, veterans, milkmaids and various delegates lend their mouth to one standardised unique speech; each in turn becomes the temporary depository of the unchanging *langue de bois*’ (1989: 76).

No doubt that, together with the notion itself, the view of ‘newspeak’ as a deficiency, has been influenced by George Orwell’s dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949), which captured an ominous tendency of the totalitarian regimes of the 1930s and 1940s to create a language (Newspeak) which would be totally controlled by the rulers and resistant to the formation and expression of independent thoughts (Young 1991). Another influence is Victor Klemperer’s account of totalitarian language in Nazi Germany in his seminal *The Language of the Third Reich* (1957). However, both authors characterized totalitarian language by the seemingly paradoxical conjunction of paucity and manipulative efficacy. Thus, Klemperer’s early chapter, tellingly titled ‘Distinguishing feature: poverty’, begins with the words: ‘The [language of the Third Reich] is destitute. Its poverty is a fundamental one; it is as if it has sworn a vow of poverty’ (Klemperer 2013 [1957]: 17). Later on, in the same chapter, this turns out to be not an impediment in the functioning of ideological language, but an index of its terrible potency: ‘it reigned supreme, as omnipotent as it was wretched, omnipotent in its very poverty’ (ibid.: 18).

Beyond ‘wooden language’

More recently, the dichotomy of the ‘wooden language’ paradigm has been countered by the approaches that aim to complicate the model of deficient language and demonstrate internal dynamics within the communist variety as well as linguistic negotiations taking place behind the uniform façade. Less-charged terminology aligned with sociolinguistic concepts has been proposed, such as a ‘sociolect’ (Bogdanov 2008), the Bakhtin-inspired ‘authoritative discourse’ (Yurchak 2006) and a linguistic variety as an element of diglossia. A discussion of the communist variety is contained in Chapter 8 of this volume, while other interpretations include, for example, Wierzbicka’s (1990) notion of political diglossia. Although the chapters of this book use a number of perspectives and, consequently, terms for their discussion of the communist language, they come from a common understanding that encompasses the broad sense of a variety as a speech community’s way of speaking (Woolard 2004: 74).

Scholarship has moved to an understanding that the ‘wooden language’ paradigm had largely overlooked that the ideological messages of state socialism presupposed a culture of communication which had its own sophistication and multiplicity of voices. To remedy this, Patrick Sériot (2008) has proposed a

model based on the fluidity of linguistic identity, in which the inclusive and the exclusive sides of the ‘newspeak’-using linguistic ‘us’ are seen as intertwined and superimposed, allowing a number of simultaneous interpretations. This leads to all kinds of discursive distortions of the dominant code, including ‘the seeping of the speech into another discourse’ (ibid.: 167). Without querying the term ‘newspeak’, Daniel Weiss (1995, 2000, 2005; also Vais 2000) demonstrates, nevertheless, that communist language had internal heterogeneity and dynamic quality. Weiss accomplishes this by analysing specific differences, at the semantic, lexical, grammatical and pragmatic levels, between the Stalinist and the Late Soviet types of ‘newspeak’. He contends that while during the Stalinist period the communist variety existed in three stylistic types – agitational, bureaucratic and ritual, in the Late Soviet period, the agitational component weakened leading to de-emotivization and de-metaphorization of the communist language especially noticeable during the ‘stagnation’ period (Vais 2000: 548). In her *Book about Motherland*, Irina Sandomirskaja unveils how potent mythologemes and imagery perform as sophisticated tools of aesthetization in the Soviet discourse (2001). Additionally, an influential study by Alexei Yurchak (2006) has given powerful support to the effort of de-homogenizing the official Soviet discourse. Yurchak demonstrates that from the ‘high Stalinist’ to the Late Soviet period, this discourse evolved from a regime privileging constative meaning to one defined by a ‘performative’ quality.

Of the studies of communist languages in Eastern Europe, the work of Cornelia Ilie is especially noteworthy; her accounts of a pragmatic underpinning of the participant role attributions in Ceaușescu’s speeches reveal the complexity of totalitarian linguistic manipulation (Ilie 1998, 2005). Furthermore, the case studies presented in two recent edited volumes (Andrews 2011; Kress 2012) have persuasively demonstrated that pragmatic and discursive mechanisms of totalitarian language were continuous in various spheres of communication across the Communist bloc. Both volumes have also argued that lingering post-Communist legacies of totalitarian modes of expression are affecting current discourses in the entire post-Communist world.

The historical and anthropological perspectives provided further insights into the complexity of intentions underlying the use of the communist variety. As Sarah Davies argues, ‘the official language’ in Stalinist society ‘was used and understood in a far from passive way [...] [The] “janus-headed” character of signs prevented the Stalinist regime from imposing one monolithic interpretation of reality’ (1997: 7). Davies shows that the official discourse was not only used for the establishment of political domination but also reappropriated by the subordinate groups for the expression of dissent. For example, both groups used the same vocabulary such as *revoliutsiia* [revolution] and *narod* [the people] (ibid.; see also Robertson and Kukulin this volume).

Moreover, in their extremely influential writing on the expression of subjectivity under Stalin, Stephen Kotkin (1995) and Johan Hellbeck (2000, 2006) demonstrated that the janus-headed nature of the communist linguistic variety existed within a very intimate expression of a single individual. Exploring

subjectivity of workers of the Soviet showcase Magnitogorsk metal-smelting plant during the 1930s industrialization, Kotkin has discovered that ‘speaking Bolshevik’, rather than being a purely restrictive externality, was, in fact, a means adopted by the workers as they negotiated a social identity within the constraints of the regime. And Hellbeck, studying diaries of the Stalinist period, observed that communist language was the tool of bringing the communist system inside the human being, and facilitated the diarists’ urge to inscribe themselves into social and political order, filling their narratives with the values and categories of Soviet ideology (2006: 5).

The volume

Set against the background of the scholarly engagements discussed above, the present collection of texts intends to be another significant step towards problematizing the communist variety. The title of the book – *The Vernaculars of Communism* – signals the fact that the language under discussion should not be thought in the singular. The reason is not only that the Soviet Union and socialist countries of Eastern Europe dictated their communist values in different tongues and that experiences of life under communism were far from homogenous. More importantly, the book demonstrates that within each society, the communist variety constituted part of a sophisticated linguistic culture, which included metalinguistic discussion, linguistic negotiation, unexpected semantic productivity and shifts, and disloyalty as well as loyalty of discourses. To be sure, this linguistic culture was subject to strict controls; but it was also the producer of effects not all of which were, or could be, controlled; the communist variety was a field of personal investments and appropriations, and a generator of practices not all of which could have been sanctioned or prefigured.

The book begins with the discussion of the linguistic culture of Stalinism. Chapter 1 takes the reader straight into the crucible of the Soviet notion of language – Stalin’s 1950s article ‘On Marxism in Linguistics’. This was a major authoritative master-narrative, the *Ur*-text of the so-called ‘Stalinist language teaching’, whose publication caused a shake-up in Soviet linguistic thought. Analysing Stalin’s discourse on language, Evgeny Dobrenko argues that its strategies, more than anything, stood for the representation of power in Late Stalinism.

Conceptualization of the communist language of the Stalinist period continues in Chapter 2, in which Petre Petrov examines a broad class of expressions in Stalinist officialese, the ‘Soviet gnostic’, so as to bring out the peculiar semantics characteristic of it. He shows that such highly typical, sloganistic, assertions as ‘Soviet youth votes for happiness’ problematize the standard semantic opposition of existential and normative generalizations; the two are spliced together, as it were. The Soviet gnostic is a mode of meaning production that is, at the same time, the production of interpretative indeterminacy. Petrov treats the oscillation between basic semantic dichotomies (existential and normative, episodic and characterizing, token and type) not as an anomaly that might

persuade us – one more time – of the mind-numbing properties of Stalinist ideology, but as a feature that might reveal to us the ontological presuppositions of this ideology.

In Chapter 3, Irina Sandomirskaja demonstrates that one and the same discourse, one and the same ‘word’, holds within itself both the secretly subversive self and the authoritarian other. This is the peculiarity of Aesopian language, which is formally indistinguishable from the linguistic-ideological orthodoxy, yet aspires to speak against it. Sandomirskaja orchestrates a dialogue between some of the genre’s most important practitioners and commentators during the Soviet period: Kornei Chukovskii, Anna Akhmatova, Joseph Brodsky, Lev Losev, Lidia Ginzburg. As the dialogue unfolds, the understanding of what is at stake in Aesopian communication shifts: from emphasis on the coded and politically explosive message; to appreciation of the formal-poetic aspect; to corrosive doubt about the true value of a political subversion that speaks the same language as the power it challenges. Sandomirskaja concludes that the ambiguities of Aesopian speech ultimately point to its addressee. Its subversive potential is not an independent quantity, something contained in the utterance. It exists only insofar as there exists a community of people willing to play the game; which is to say – people who recognize themselves as the intended decoders of the coded text.

Part II expands the discussion across the socialist countries of the Eastern Bloc. The authors deal with the variety of the national communist codes and the culture of their intense negotiation and subversion during various periods of socialism. In Chapter 4, Călin Morar-Vulcu offers a painstaking analysis of the construction of one of the central notions of communist ideology – the notion of class in official Romanian discourse. Finding its inspiration in Hallidayan systemic-functional approach and Theo van Leeuwen’s linguistics of social actors, Morar-Vulcu argues that the representation of the working class, the peasantry and the intellectuals was ambiguous and fluid, and changed substantially between Stalinism and Late Socialism. At each stage, as Morar-Vulcu shows, the language of class representation was negotiated as fluctuating between being involved in material processes (*doing*) and relational processes (*being* or *having*).

In Chapter 5, James Robertson sets out to show that the case of Yugoslavia in the late 1960s stands in contrast with the picture Yurchak has drawn of the state of official language after Stalinism. Because it was decoupled from the authority of the Party, the language of Yugoslav socialism was not emptied of denotative content. On the contrary: it remained a viable idiom in which aspirations for a genuine socialist community could be voiced. Robertson identifies two principal historical moments that led to the ‘unhinging’ of the communist variety from the master signifiers of state and Party. The crucial first one is Tito’s break with Stalin and the attempt to formulate, in opposition to the Soviet regime, a truer version of state socialism. The other is Yugoslavia’s participation in the international movement for Third-World liberation. The effect, in both cases, was that the language of socialism was revitalized, becoming once more the discourse

of active political struggle and opposition. This is how it was deployed by the student activists of 1968, as they challenged the state to live up to its declared identity.

In Chapter 6, Jonathan L. Larson takes on one of the most ritualized – and ridiculed – modes of public discourse under socialism, the double-headed Party genre of criticism and self-criticism. He discusses the sanctioned parameters of *kritika* and *sebakritika* in socialist Czechoslovakia before showing how these parameters were volatized in practice. Larson's case study is that of literary critic Pavol Števíček, who became the target of public, Party-endorsed castigation in the aftermath of the Prague Spring. In reading the denunciatory articles against Števíček, Larson shows that *kritika* was a more dialogic, and less formalistic, mode than traditionally believed. Spurred on by the prior 'word of the other' (in this case, an earlier critical article by Števíček), censoring criticism was, thereby, also charged with emotion. It was more than a ritualistic execution of the regime's 'penal semiotics', since it allowed for the unscripted expression of subjectivity.

The 'word of the other' in Samantha Sherry's study is not that of the 'enemy among us' but of literary comrades from the English-speaking abroad. In Chapter 7, she examines linguistic and ideological negotiations in Soviet translation practices centred in the two principal journals for foreign literature: the Stalinist *Internatsional'naiia literatura* and its post-Stalinist successor, *Innostrannaiia literatura*. On multiple textual examples, she demonstrates how ideologically neutral or innocuous meanings in the English original threaten to yield highly charged messages when rendered in the communist Russian. The job of translation, then, becomes double: not only to do justice to the source text, but also to master an ideological shift and diffuse potential subversiveness or ambiguity. This is a censorial function, to be sure; yet censorship is viewed here in terms of productivity; it is seen not only as a mutilating or falsifying operation, but also as a practice that generates (sometimes quite inventive) discursive solutions.

Part III of the book examines the afterlife of the communist language which, in the post-Soviet discourses, both gets an increasing prominence but also mutates and hybridizes. In Chapter 8, Lara Ryazanova-Clarke proposes a notion of 'linguistic mnemonics' to conceptualize the role of communist knowledge frames imported into contemporary Russian public discourse through the use of the remnants of the communist variety. Developing Bakhtin's concept of ventriloquation, Ryazanova-Clarke examines types of language used to trigger the memories of the Soviet past in the discourses of newspaper narratives of the Victory Day and of the television talk shows about Stalinism. She argues that despite the copious borrowing of certain linguistic elements from the communist variety, contemporary Russian discourse continues to negotiate the language of the past, producing ambiguities and code shifting.

Finally, Ilya Kukulin in Chapter 9 takes stock of the two generations of communist political rhetoric users in the post-Soviet left-wing movement. He argues that the first post-Soviet generation of left-wing ideologues and orators active in the 1990s used the Soviet language adopted from their youth to mobilize the

older audience. In contrast, the language of the new generation, including such public figures as Sergei Udal'tsov, is characterized by hybridity, as it mixes the Soviet idiom with the political rhetoric of liberalism and human rights.

Note

- 1 For a detailed analysis of the early Russian sociology of language see Brandist 2008; Brandist and Chown 2010.

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Part I

Language regimes of Stalinism

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1 Linguistic turn à la Soviétique

The power of grammar, and the grammar of power*

Evgeny Dobrenko

In 1950 Stalin initiated and participated in the ‘linguistic discussion’ in *Pravda*. The results were the rout of Nikolai Marr’s ‘new theory of language’, prevalent in the USSR since the 1930s, and the introduction of ‘Stalinist language teaching’. In this chapter, I will focus on political consequences and the broad ideological implications of Stalin’s intervention in linguistics, with special attention to his *Marxism and Linguistics Issues* and the strategies for representation of power in Late Stalinism.

‘Comrade Stalin’s work’ entitled *Marxism and Linguistics Issues* is a 50-page brochure. It contains an article that occupied one page in *Pravda* in the course of the discussion (on 20 June 1950) and four short responses to readers in the form of letters (one from 4 July and three more from 2 August). In the three years following its release, Stalin’s text was endlessly cited and commented upon. Nonetheless, as Vladimir Alpatov observed, ‘we have devoted little serious analysis [...] to Stalin’s work itself’ (Alpatov 1991: 184; see also Groys 2006; Sandomirskaja 2006; Ilizarov 2012). When the text was examined, it was primarily by historians of linguistics. However, as early as 1950, linguists were forced to transform themselves into philosophers when they undertook a commentary on Stalin’s arguments about common themes. Stalin’s theorizing itself obliged them to discuss not so much linguistics as topics such as the base, the superstructure and class awareness.

Stalin’s work was at first extolled as an example of his scientific genius, then it was substantially forgotten. A fair amount has been written about Stalin’s reasons for writing it, but nothing about the reasons why it was forgotten. The fact that it lacks a single original thought (or, if there is just one – that the Russian language developed from some sort of ‘Kursk-Orel dialect’ – it is incorrect) can scarcely justify the oblivion to which it was consigned. Stalin never strove for novelty in his thinking, but rather for political expediency. In every case, the forcefulness of his thought is in its efficacy, not its originality. The reason his ‘work’ has been forgotten is not so much that after his death his name was preferably left undisturbed unless there was a particular need, or that when the Soviet Union came to an end, there were a great many more important reasons for referring to Stalin than his relatively inoffensive (in the light of their consequences) linguistic disquisitions. Nor is it the fact that for historians, the

brochure is 'about linguistics', while for linguists it is merely a page in history. The main thing is that Stalin's text is not about language at all. In other words, its relation to linguistics is quite peripheral. Above all it is a metatext and a striking example of Stalin's theorizing about 'Marxism' with examples taken from linguistics; that is, the real issue is 'Marxism', and 'linguistics issues' are merely mentioned in passing. It is a text about Stalin, not about language.

Stalin's 'work' is constructed by the author's favourite question-and-answer principle, in which he formulates the questions and provides the answers himself. This allows Stalin completely to control the course of the discussion. The basic text, then, consists of four questions that he asks himself (on behalf of some 'group of young comrades'). The first question is about the base and the superstructure, and the second about the relationship of language to class. The third asks what language is (if not a superstructure and not a class phenomenon). Here, Stalin's discourse about assimilation/subordination, the victory of one language over another, sudden disruptions in language and the revolution in a language as a condition for transitioning from the previous quality to a new one, is more from the arena of politics than of linguistics. The fourth and final question is about the role of the current discussions in overcoming the crisis in Soviet linguistics; that is, it is more about the workings of scholarly institutions than about language.

Stalin's 'answers' are also only marginally connected to language, and they focus on general propositions that are merely applied to language. The four 'answers to colleagues' are supposed to compensate for this deficiency, so it seems. And, in fact, these 'comrades' are specifically interested in questions about language, but from Stalin's answers it again becomes clear that his main concern is not about linguistics, but is political. The first letter, for example, to 'comrade Krasheninnikova', is constructed in the form of answers to an interviewer who tries to balance an already declared stance: if Stalin speaks against Marr, his interlocutor wonders whether there is something positive about Marr; if Stalin says that semantics is harmful, comrade Krasheninnikova wonders whether semasiology, at least, has even some sort of rational principle; if Stalin says that language is not a class phenomenon, his correspondent asks whether one should at least consider 'the essence of the ideas expressed' class-related, and so forth. Every time, Stalin 'backtracks', so to speak: yes, of course, there is much that is 'valuable and instructive' in Marr; yes, he has 'works written with talent'; yes, semantics is useful if not taken to absolutes; and so on, and so forth. The three other letters are dedicated to a definition of Marxism and a criticism of dogmatism ('Reply to Comrade A. Kholopov'), the curious question of how deaf-mutes think, if they have no mastery of language ('Reply to Comrades D. Belkin and S. Furer'), and, finally, issues of class again – how to interpret the concept of 'class jargon' ('Reply to Comrade Sanzheev').

In a word, Stalin examines linguistic topics, properly speaking, only in passing. For him, linguistics is one of the 'social sciences', in which he is an undisputed specialist: he starts out by saying, 'I am not a linguist and, of course, I cannot completely satisfy the comrades. As far as Marxism in linguistics goes,

just as in the other social sciences, I do have a direct relationship to this' (16, 104).¹

Striking here is the almost complete anonymity of the objects of criticism: only at the end, when the matter of personal accusations arises, does Stalin name a few names. Usually, however, they are indistinctly referenced as 'comrades':²

- 'certain of our comrades have concluded that...'
- 'these comrades forget that...'
- 'do these comrades think that...'
- 'the mistake that these comrades make is that...'
- 'it appears that the esteemed comrades have distorted Lenin's views'
- 'certain of our comrades have dragged themselves along in the footsteps of the Bundovites'; and so forth.

The absurd anonymity of these invectives reaches an apogee when Stalin, in yet another rhetorical passage, poses the question, 'Do the aforementioned comrades acknowledge this tenet of Marxism?' The 'comrades' were in fact not 'mentioned' by name while the word 'comrades' is used more than 40 times in the text.

This is not simply a matter of a stylistic feature. Anonymity is a defining strategy of Stalin's text, which is replete with impersonal constructions such as the following, wherein the third-person 'they' is not identified:

- 'They reference Marx, they quote one place in his article "Saint Max" where it says that [...]'
- 'They reference Engels, they quote Engels' words from the brochure The Situation of the Working Class in England'
- 'They reference Lafargue'; 'Finally, they reference Stalin. They include a quote from Stalin about [...]'
- 'They say that [...]'

This anonymity, which is on the whole characteristic of Stalin's public discourse, is the expression of the narrative tension between academicism and the status of the text: on the one hand, a political text is passed off as an academic one; on the other, the status of the text by the Great Leader itself does not permit its author ('the coryphaeus of the sciences') to get bogged down in details, even less so to name individuals (he talks only about Marr, and mentions the linguist Ivan Meshchaninov in passing, as well as his correspondents and the participants of the discussion to whom he makes reference). It is not that Stalin wants to emphasize the prevalence of the mistakes made by these 'comrades' who are referencing, quoting, or just 'saying'. As the Leader he is engaged not in correcting linguists but in giving voice to certain truths that are far more important than any specific individuals, not to mention all of linguistics put together.

The peculiarity of Stalin's text is not its content, but rather its form of presentation. On the one hand, it offers itself as an example of comradely criticism

in an atmosphere of scholarly discussion and Party-spirited democracy, and accordingly is presented in an 'ordinary' way: this text, longer than any one of Stalin's over the preceding ten years, is printed with a modest signature as 'one of' those received by the editors. On the other hand, the weight of a statement made by Stalin himself was such that even a short welcoming telegram without real content, or two sentences in response to some correspondent's question, was printed on the front pages of all the country's newspapers in huge letters and with an enormous portrait of him. But in this case, Stalin is speaking simultaneously as a private individual (just another citizen who has become interested in linguistics, and who decides to take part in a newspaper discussion), as a scholar and as the Leader.

As a 'private individual', he publishes his text in exactly the same format as the other participants of the discussion. As a scholar, he demonstrates his mastery of the material and shows off his knowledge of the details and of the special terms. Thus, like Andrei Zhdanov³ discussing atonality in music, he talks about semasiology and pointedly observes that Marr has 'particular works that are good and written with talent' wherein he 'conscientiously and, I must say, expertly examines particular languages'. The reader of course is unaware that the basic source of Stalin's linguistic wisdom are the Great Soviet Encyclopedia and Dmitrii Kudriavskii's introductory textbook on linguistics, published in 1912 in Tartu, which Stalin read it only a few months before writing this new 'work of genius', and that the person discussing Marr's abilities as a language researcher is one who does not know a single foreign language. Finally, as a Leader, Stalin declares, 'If I were not convinced of the honesty of Comrade Meshchaninov and of the other people in linguistics, I would say that such behaviour is tantamount to sabotage'. Such a declaration could not be made by either a private individual or a scholar: this is almost the only place in the text where Stalin lifts his mask.

The goal of this text boils down to positioning a scholar as a Leader, and the goal is achieved by positioning a Leader as a scholar. Scholarliness is a most significant legitimizing underpinning for power, and Stalin displays it mainly in using the appropriate jargon. For example, one of his favourite usages in this treatise is the word 'formula', which he employs 40 times [!]; it holds second place, perhaps, only to the word 'comrades'. Here are examples:

- 'Can our comrades really not be familiar with the Marxists' famous *formula* about [...]. Do they agree with this Marxist *formula*?'
- 'the *formula* regarding the "class nature" of language is a mistaken, non-Marxist *formula*'
- 'Russian Marxists have concluded that Engels' *formula* envisions the victory of socialism in all countries [...]. As one can see, we are dealing with two different *formulas* [...]. Dogmatists and talmudists might say... that it is necessary to discard one of the *formulas* [...]. But Marxists cannot help saying that the dogmatists and talmudists are mistaken, for both these *formulas* are correct, but not absolutely, and each is correct for its own time:

the *formula* of Soviet Marxists for the period of the victory of socialism in one or a few countries, and Engels's *formula* for the period ... in which the necessary conditions will be created for applying Engels's *formula*'

- 'In its development, Marxism cannot but be enriched by new experience [...]. [C]ertain of its *formulas* and conclusions cannot but change with the passage of time, they cannot but be replaced by new *formulas* and conclusions [...]. Marxism does not acknowledge unchangeable conclusions and *formulas*.'

Can there be anything 'more scientific' than 'formulas'? They transform Stalin's text into perfect 'science'. However, it is not simply a question of Stalin's creating science through his choice of words. The legitimacy of his power is projected specifically through science. In a short, three-page speech he gave for the reception of high school workers on 17 May 1938, the word 'science' and its derivatives occur 43 times:

In its development, *science* knows quite a few courageous people who knew how to tear down the old and create the new, despite any obstacles whatsoever. *Men of science* like Galileo, Darwin, and many others, are known to all. I would like to concentrate on one of such *coryphaei of science* who is, in addition to that, the greatest man of our times. I have in mind Lenin, our teacher, our educator. Remember the year 1917. Based on *scientific* analysis of the social development of Russia, based on *scientific* analysis of the international situation, Lenin concluded that the only way out of the situation was the victory of socialism in Russia. This was a more-than-unexpected conclusion for many *people of science* at the time. Plekhanov, one of the outstanding *people of science*, spoke disdainfully at the time about Lenin, stating that Lenin was 'delirious'. Other *people of science*, no less famous, stated that 'Lenin has lost his mind', that he ought to be locked up somewhere far away. At that time, all and sundry *people of science* were against Lenin as a person who was destroying *science*. But Lenin had no fear of going against the grain, against stagnation. And Lenin was victorious.

There you have an example of a *man of science* who boldly waged war on obsolete *science* and paved the way for new *science*.

(14, 250–251)

The opposition between 'people of science' and 'men of science' (who were also 'coryphaei of science') allows us to see Stalin constructing – as always, via Lenin – his own image. In an era when science and progress inspired a cult, the terms 'leader' and 'coryphaeus of science' were practically synonyms. Science needs power for its advancement; power (a leader) needs science for its (his) legitimacy. The consolidation of the status of science becomes a most significant state task – after the war, 'scientists became one of the most significant elite groups of Soviet society, ranking just below party/political, economic, and military elites' (Kozhevnikov 1997: 52). As distinct from capricious market

capitalism, socialism develops according to the ‘scientifically’ established laws of Marxism–Leninism or, in Georgii Aleksandrov’s oxymoronic definition, ‘the scientific ideology of the proletariat’ (Aleksandrov 1952: 5). The spirit of science becomes a synonym for the legitimacy of the political system. For Stalin, science was a special ideological arena in which he expresses himself in the specific style of debates/directives. His thinking is always politically refined and efficacious: one might say that, as it is directed towards a definite practical goal, it is exemplary of ‘the connection between theory and practice’. His thinking always moves between polar opposites, and operates with unambiguous categories. This by no means makes Stalin’s thinking itself unambiguous: on the contrary, as we shall see, his rigor only compensates for the absolute relativism of his debates. As Mikhail Vaiskopf observes, this semblance of definiteness is generally characteristic of Stalin’s style, in which ‘everything is evasive, everything bifurcates – the only stable thing is the illusion of the unbending solidity and clarity of the definitions’ (2001: 59). Stalin’s text is replete with such unambiguousness:

QUESTION: Is it true that language is a superstructure on the base?

ANSWER: No, it is untrue. (16, 104)

QUESTION: Is it true that language always was, and will remain, class-oriented?

ANSWER: No, it is untrue. (16, 108)

QUESTION: Did *Pravda* act rightly when it opened up a free discussion on the issues in linguistics?

ANSWER: Yes, it did. (16, 121)

Pairs of opposites like ‘correct/incorrect’, ‘right(ly)/wrong(ly)’, and so forth, are hyperabundant in Stalin’s text:

- ‘It is absolutely *correct* that [...]’
- ‘It would be absolutely *incorrect* to think that [...]’
- ‘Lenin is absolutely *right* about this’
- ‘Lafargue was not *right*’
- ‘Was Marr *right* to ascribe language to the category of implements of production? No, undoubtedly, he was *incorrect*’
- ‘You no doubt are *correctly* interpreting my stance on the issue of dialects’.

Another favourite pairing is ‘true/untrue’:

- ‘Of course, it is *untrue* that ...’
- ‘All of this is *true*’
- ‘This, of course, is *untrue*’.

Hence there is the constant reminder of someone’s ‘mistakes’ (the word and its derivatives crop up more than 20 times in the text):

- ‘Confusing language with superstructure means making a serious *mistake*’

- ‘I think there is nothing more *mistaken* than such a conclusion’
- ‘Our comrades are making at least two *mistakes* about this’
- ‘Our comrades’ *mistake* here is that [...]’
- ‘However, it would be deeply *mistaken* to think that [...]’
- ‘Of course, Marr’s works are not made up completely of *mistakes*’
- ‘Marr made some egregious *mistakes*’.

Practically speaking, those who wrote that Stalin created the greatest work in the history of linguistics were correct: it is truly a scientific text of extreme truth and extreme effectiveness. Each time (no matter in which context) that Stalin pairs ‘right/wrong’ or ‘true/untrue’, he confirms his absolute power. His absolute truth is assured by absolute power. This power is consolidated by truth, and truth by power. The demonstration of both is a twofold act, and they are realized in it. Any statement Stalin makes is an act of demonstrating power. Ultimately, these statements are acts of exercising power.

As Boris Groys observes, Stalin reacted so severely to the thesis that language is a superstructure because he was convinced of the totality of language, while

a superstructure is not total; after all, it stands opposed to the base, it is limited by it. If language is a part of the superstructure, this means that it is also limited in its effect. Stalin does not at all like this limitation. And this makes sense: since all the economic processes in the Soviet Union were defined and controlled by language, limitation of language to the sphere of a superstructure would inevitably have meant a limitation of Stalin’s leading role and a curtailment of his mighty powers that were linked to shaping the base of Soviet society.

(Groys 2006)

According to this view,

a communist revolution is a transfer of society from the medium of money to the medium of language. It implements a true linguistic turn on the level of social practice. [...] Communism is a project, the goal of which is to subordinate economics to politics, in order to provide the latter with sovereign freedom of action. The medium of economics is money. Economics operates with numbers. The medium of politics is language. Politics operates with words – arguments, programs, and resolutions, as well as orders, prohibitions, instructions, and regulations.

(Ibid.)

Stalin’s wide-ranging statements about the base and the superstructure are striking for the rather surprising anthropomorphism in them:

The superstructure is born from the base, but this by no means indicates that it only reflects the base, that it is passive, neutral, or *has an indifferent*

attitude toward the fate of its base, to the fate of classes, to the nature of the [social] order. On the contrary, *once it has made its appearance*, it becomes a supreme active force, it *actively assists* its base to take shape and consolidate itself, it *takes all the necessary steps* to help the new order to finish off and liquidate the old base and the old classes.

Indeed, it cannot be otherwise. The superstructure is created from the base in order to *serve* it, to *actively help* it to take shape and consolidate itself, to *actively fight* for the liquidation of the old base that has outlived its time and its old superstructure. It need only *reject this service role it has*, the superstructure need only to *move from a position of active defense of its base to a position of indifference toward it*, to a position of an identical attitude toward [all] the classes, and it will lose its essence and cease being a superstructure.

(16, 105)

These personifications are supposed to substitute for an answer to the question of what place language has in the system of relations between the base and the superstructure, if it does not belong to either one. According to Stalin, language is so all-encompassing that it is not even described in ordinary Marxist categories:

Language must not be ascribed to either the category of bases or the category of superstructures. Neither should it be ascribed to the category of 'intermediate' phenomena between the base and the superstructure, since such 'intermediate' phenomena do not exist [...]. Does this fact give grounds to ascribing language to the category of implements of production? No, it does not.

(16, 125–126)

The operational sphere of language is unlimited. Language is ultra-historical and eternal, like a people or a nation itself, since the bases and the superstructures are replaced, but language is not.

Stalin's text leaves far more questions than it provides answers. For example, if language is not a superstructure, then what exactly is it in the system of Marxist coordinates? Or, how can the superstructure 'reject' the defence of its own base, and if it can (even theoretically!) 'lose its essence and cease being a superstructure', then what does it become?

Money in capitalism – this is what language in socialism can be compared to. From Stalin's treatise it is clear that when he talks about language, he conceives of it in terms of a medium, in terms of political economics:

There is a fundamental difference between language and the means of production. The difference is that the means of production produce material goods, while language produces nothing or else 'produces' nothing but words. To put it more precisely, people who possess the means of production can produce material goods, but the same people, if they have

language but do not have the means of production, cannot produce material goods. It is not hard to understand that if language could produce material goods, chatterboxes would be the wealthiest people in the world.

(16, 126)

In another passage, when the topic shifts to the connection between language and thinking, the metonymic construction becomes completely transparent:

Being directly connected to thinking, language registers and fixes in words and in the union of words in sentences the results of the working of thought, the success of man's cognitive work, and thus makes the exchange of thoughts in human society possible.

(16, 115)

In this capacity language plays the role of a medium, a universal means of exchange, and a general equivalent (that is, money).

Stalin's work about language is first and foremost a metatext. As a matter of fact, it reveals both Stalin's mechanism of presentation and his mode of thinking. By speaking out against Marxist semantics, Stalin insisted on the priority of grammar, which the Marxists snubbed as 'formalism'. An expert at political games, Stalin had no difficulty discerning the nature of this snub: "'formalism" was invented by the authors of the "new teaching" to make the battle against their opponents in linguistics easier."⁴

If there was anything in grammar that attracted Stalin, it was the fact that it deals with 'laws'. He talks endlessly about these 'laws':

- 'when hybridization occurs, one of the languages usually emerges as the victor [...] and continues to develop according to *the internal laws* of its own development'
- 'hybridization does not produce a new, third language, but rather preserves one of the languages [...] and gives it the possibility of developing according to *the internal laws* of its own development'
- 'the Russian language continued to advance and to become perfected according to *the internal laws* of its own development'; and so on.

In their universality, these magical 'laws' originate in the 'laws' of history and logic, and Western scholars are criticized for rejecting them. The chief commentator of Stalin's texts, former head of Central Committee Agitprop Aleksandrov, wrote:

One of the most characteristic examples of the displays of the most profound idiocy in contemporary bourgeois science is its rejection of both the general and the specific laws governing social development. The bourgeois 'scientists' literally take up arms against the very notion of a 'law'.

(1952: 136)

Stalin's real subject is not even language but logic, although in his 'work' this term is not mentioned even once. Actually, what he describes as grammar is in fact logic:

The distinguishing feature of grammar is that it provides rules about the change of words, not envisioning specific words but words in general without any specificity; it provides rules for composing sentences, not envisioning specific sentences, for example a specific subject, a specific predicate, and so forth, but any kind of sentences at all, without regard to the specific form of one sentence or another. Hence, in abstracting from the particular and the specific both in words and in sentences, grammar takes the generality that lies at the heart of the changes of words and the combination of words in sentences, and constructs grammatical rules, grammatical laws, from it. Grammar is the result of the long-term abstracting work of human thought, the measure of the enormous success of thought. In this respect, grammar is reminiscent of geometry, which provides its own laws by abstracting from specific objects, looking at objects as bodies devoid of specificity, and defining relationships between them not as specific relationships of any specific objects but as relationships between bodies in general, without any specificity.

(16, 117)

For Stalin, logic was indeed the universal language. For him it replaced history and no doubt was the basis for his interest in language. This is why we should refine what we said above about Stalin's work not really being about language: even in the places where Stalin touches directly on the topic of language, strictly speaking, he is in fact talking about logic. The universality of logical laws has come together here with the totality of language.

It was the affirmation of this totality that led Stalin to reject the characterization of language as a superstructure. He specifies four characteristics that distinguish language from a superstructure, and each of them is one of the facets of totality. First, bases and superstructures change, but language practically does not. In other words, one should not exaggerate novelty in language – it is total in its stability, in its immutability against the backdrop of social changes.

Second, bases and superstructures are class-related, but language is not. In other words, one should not exaggerate the significance of differentiation. Here language plays the role of an underpinning for de-differentiation, social homogeneity and unification. In its social totality and its use by 'all the people', it is reminiscent of the Party that also becomes the only one of 'all the people' in a totalitarian state. Like a party, language, as Stalin says, 'identically serves all of society, all classes of society [...] independently of social standing' (16, 105). The Bolshevik Party, after the adoption of Stalin's constitution in 1936, was just such a party.

Third, superstructures, just like bases, live through a certain era, a certain segment of time, while language is the product of a great many eras. This

longevity reveals its transhistorical totality. What is important is that which is not subject to history and change, what is steeped in tradition and is socially stable. Superstructures, on the contrary, are short lived.

Fourth, language is unique. As opposed to the superstructure, the sphere of influence of which is, according to Stalin, 'narrow and limited',

language reflects changes in production immediately and directly, without waiting for changes in the base. Therefore the sphere of influence of language, which encompasses all the domains of human activity, is much broader and more varied than the sphere of influence of the superstructure. More than that, it is almost unlimited.

(16, 108)

Thus language is total in its uniqueness and unique in its totality. Chikobava, Stalin's main linguistic advisor, subsequently emphasized Stalin's grasp of this uniqueness:

[B]efore, it was considered unthinkable that in the sphere of social phenomena, elements could exist without being part of the base or the superstructure. Comrade Stalin has proven that such a social phenomenon can exist, that language must be recognized as such a phenomenon.

(Chikobava 1952: 50)

Furthermore, the superstructure reflects changes in production indirectly – through economics and the base, while language does so directly (and needs no institutional formulation). This unique universality and directness constitute yet another facet of totality.

Thus Stalin develops (in reverse) a corpus of *total linguistics* that – through logic – essentially describes the laws of total sociology and politics. In actuality, he talks about social phenomena. He declares, for example, that 'the vocabulary of a language acquires a very great significance when it acts by the command of the language's grammar' (16, 115). This 'acting by command' is reminiscent of the 'leading role' of the party in society.⁵ Grammar has the same relationship to language as logic has to thought and the Party and its leader to society. Grammar, logic, and Party/leader – these are the higher powers that produce laws. Thus it was easy for interpreters of Stalin's text to discuss 'the organizing role of grammar in language' (Iartseva 1952: 352–353).

The universality and historical primacy of logic are what determined Stalin's rejection of the theories about the prelogical thought of primitive man that had been suggested to Marr by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and Ernst Cassirer. As a matter of fact, Stalin is returning Soviet linguistics to the logical school in grammar from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that had to a significant extent developed under the influence of Cartesian rationalism (the laws of language are a reflection of the laws of logic, since a word is a sign of a concept and a sentence an expression of judgement).

In Stalin's view, before there was logic, language was not language (thought for him was a synonym of logic and hence of language). He declares that spoken language was primary ('Spoken language, or the language of words, was always the only language of human society' (16, 130)), but he has few arguments to support this assertion. The unique nature of language that Stalin pointed out lay in its 'grammatical structure': 'Thanks to grammar, language acquires the ability to clothe human thoughts in a material envelope of language' (16, 116). One might also say that for Stalin, language was equal to public thought, to thinking out loud. Moreover, language was the logical framework of the nationally articulated thought: in Ivan Andreev's interpretation of Stalin's position,

the grammatical structure of a language, as it is common to all classes of a particular nation [...] substantially differs from the grammatical structure of the language of a different nation, while the true logical structure of thought is common to all classes and nations that inhabit the globe.

(Andreev 1952: 170)

One might paraphrase Stalin's famous definition of Soviet culture by saying that, for him, thought is logical in content and national in form (that is, in language). In other words, language (and grammar, more than anything else) was for him a national form of the universal laws of logic upon which thought was based.

Like language, thought does not belong to the superstructure; and in just the same way, logic, like grammar, does not have the features of a superstructure or of class. It followed from Stalin's 'teaching' that:

in the life of a society, logic fulfils a function of the same order as that of language, to which it is directly tied, without intermediary. Language is the material envelope of human thoughts. If language is a tool for communication among people, without which society cannot exist, then the service role of logic is that it provides forms and laws for correct thinking.

(Leonov 1952: 258–259)

Many commentators on Stalin's 'teaching about language' have noticed that it was in fact essentially about logic: 'In Stalin's understanding of it, grammar is a scientific discipline similar to logic. But as distinct from formal logic as a science about the laws of correct thinking, grammar studies the laws of constructing the speech that realizes thought' (Pospelov 1952: 108). So, for Stalin, grammar is logic as it manifests itself in language, and language is materialized logic: in Andreev's words, his

formula [...] helps to reveal the connection between the grammatical structure of language and the logical structure of thought, and makes it possible to correctly evaluate the significance of elementary logic as the grammar of language [...]. Logic is the grammar of thought, and grammar is the logic of language.

(Andreev 1952: 177)

Thus Stalin's formula is that logic governs thought like grammar governs speech.

During the sway of Marrism, 'grammar as a school subject in fact disappeared from the secondary school and was replaced by the notorious "observations of language"' (Barkhudarov 1951: 84). Having rehabilitated one discipline, Stalin had to rehabilitate another. The rehabilitation of grammar was the natural result of the rehabilitation of logic and its return to the school that had immediately preceded it. Stalin had intended to rehabilitate logic in 1941, but this was realized only in 1946 with the adoption of the Central Committee's resolution to have logic and psychology taught in secondary school.

Very shortly before this it had been held that formal logic was a vestige of the past, an example of scholasticism, formalism, idealism and metaphysical thinking. The *Brief Dictionary of Philosophy* published in 1940 stated that 'the laws of formal logic are contrary to the laws of dialectical logic' and that 'formal logic is vapid, impoverished, and abstract, for the laws it establishes and its categories do not correspond to objective reality' (Rozental' and Iudin 1940: 296–297). But now the logic that had been persecuted from all sides returned in triumph. Its advocate was the country's chief thinker, who had personally demanded that logic be taught in secondary school and higher education.

It did not take long for commentators of Stalin's text to discover, too, an 'inseparable connection' between grammar and logic, and between language and thought:

Just as the vocabulary of a language in and of itself, outside the connection to the grammatical structure, still does not constitute language itself but is merely raw material for it, the conceptual component of thought, considered outside the connection to the logical structure, serves merely as the raw material for thought. The combination of concepts into judgements and inferences according to the rules and laws of logic gives thinking an elegant, logical and demonstrative nature [...]. When they have logical elegance, our thoughts become precise, consistent, clear, demonstrative and persuasive. We should consider the most significant aspect of our thought to be its capability of drawing correct inferences from genuine premises, the ability to connect these inferences into a logically elegant proof.

(Andreev 1952: 179)

The works of Stalin himself served as proof that 'truth' could be born only from logic: 'The classic examples of concrete truth are Stalin's definitions of concepts' (ibid.: 182).

For Stalin, logic was a basic instrument for rationalizing politics and interpreting the 'laws of history'. As it turned out, however, Marxism did not recognize any laws: according to Stalin, it 'does not recognize the immutable conclusions and formulas that are invariable for all times and periods' (16, 136). This very important theme is developed in Stalin's reply to Comrade Kholopov, whom he accuses of being dogmatic and doctrinaire because he observed a contradiction between what Stalin had said earlier and what he was now saying.

A consummate casuist and politician, Stalin treated quotations, declarations and principles opportunistically. His ideological flexibility (the same thing that he branded as political opportunism) gave rise to a contradiction: on the one hand, he was a pragmatist, and on the other, he constantly insisted on his faithfulness to the principles of the 'Marxism–Leninism' that he himself had invented and modified when politically expedient. In this he could not do without dialectical logic, which allowed him to combine contradictory strategies with respect to the texts of the 'classic writers' – to simultaneously dogmatize them and bring them to naught. Stalin wrote mockingly about 'doctrinaires' and 'talmudists' who saw 'dogmas' in the 'formulas' of Marxism, that they 'do not try to understand the essence of a thing, they quote formally, isolated from historical circumstances' (16, 134). As a result, they end up 'in a hopeless situation'. He condemned them because they 'learn the texts of summaries and old formulas of Marxism but do not understand their content' (16, 137).

Stalin's creative work and absolute privilege lay in legitimizing and ideologically justifying a political stance, that is, in essentially rewriting these 'old formulas'. However, he refrained from accusing the 'talmudists' and 'dogmatists' outright of bad intentions. Other commentators would do this for him. One of the main Marxist 'talmudists' himself, Aleksandrov, explained that the danger of these 'activities' lay in the fact that their perpetrators 'castrated the living spirit of Marxism' and 'were essentially intent on liquidating linguistics as a science' (Aleksandrov 1951: 33–34).⁶ Having been himself accused a few years prior of perversions in philosophy, Aleksandrov declared that

vulgarizers in philosophy denied the active role of progressive theory and of social consciousness, thinking that consciousness only haphazardly 'follows' after objective reality or coincides with it, and merging the super-structure with the base, dissolving it in the base and even in production.

(Ibid.: 34)

Furthermore, it came to light that the doctrinaires substituted a forced scholasticism for 'dialectic', that 'the talmudists and dogmatists drove the revolutionary spirit out of the dialectic, turned it into an empty dummy, into an artificial scheme and a lock pick', and in so doing essentially 'acted as liquidators of dialectical and historical materialism' (ibid.). These crimes on the philosophical front were leading to monstrous consequences:

[V]ulgarization of Marxism, dogmatism, and talmudism lead to a lack of perspective, to transformation of people into wheeler-dealers and nitpickers [?!], they lead to the subordination of the Soviet people to bourgeois ideology, and ultimately are intended to liquidate Marxism.

(Ibid.)

Thus, when all was said and done, the 'political significance' of the activities of these talmudists, doctrinaires and dogmatists lay in the 'attempts to sow doubt

about the prospects of the development of our country in its path to communism' (Aleksandrov 1951: 36); that is, these activities were leading to legally punishable offences.

Stalin's attempt to find historical roots for his anti-dogmatism (fully in keeping with dialectical logic) led to a criminalization of dogmatism:

Pedants and dogmatists, the hidden and masked enemies of Marxism and of the working class, continued to cling to the old formula of Marxism about the impossibility of socialism being victorious in one country. They held up and slowed down the development of the revolutionary movement of the working class, the fight for socialism. Trotsky, Zinov'ev, and Kamenev – the enemies of Leninism, the enemy's paid agents – were among the ranks of those who, in committing the foul crime of betrayal and deceit of the working class, clung to Engels's obsolete formula in order to delay the development of the socialist revolution, to wreck the possibility of socialism's triumph in Russia.

(Konstantinov 1951: 420)

It was only a step from this to condemnation of 'Tito-Rankovich's despicable fascist-Trotskyite gang' and of 'Truman- and Churchill-type people' who were like 'a predator run amok, who rushes about, rages and raves, and jumps from one gamble to another; the ground under his feet is on fire' (Konstantinov 1951: 424–453). Even the Proletkultists⁷ that were mentioned only in passing, to whom Stalin relegated the Marrists, were not simply a historical reference. Their activities were now being characterized as 'betrayal of the proletarian revolution, a betrayal of socialism. Counter-revolution lurked beneath the ultra-revolutionary phrases of these "Proletkultists"' (Troshin 1951: 392). Stalin himself had no need of going this far.

As an instrument of threat, his logic was first and foremost dialectical. As Mikhail Vaiskopf put it, 'dialectic as a basic feature of the entire individual and behavioural system of Stalin's personality cannot be doubted' (2001: 103). And, as Groys (2006) noted, 'Stalin's texts about linguistics in fact proclaim a contradiction by the supreme rule of logic'. Groys explains that 'language can be total only when it includes all possible assertions and denials, as well as all the possible combinations of these; that is, it not only allows but indeed demands logical contradiction of its own statements' (ibid.). A political programme based on such logic, Groys concludes, 'provides access to the totality of political space and allows one to operate not through exclusion, but through integration' (ibid.).

In the light of Groys' comments, it becomes clear why the Marrists followed other ardent revolutionaries, from the RAPPists⁸ and Proletkultists mentioned by Stalin to Pokrovsky:

The only ones who survived were those [...] who understood that if a particular assertion is considered true, it does not follow thereupon that a different,

contradictory assertion is not true. As opposed to formal logic or the dialectical logic of the Hegelian type, the logic of dialectical materialism is total.

(Ibid.)

This is why such logic easily accommodates both support of Trofim Lysenko⁹ and the rout of Marr. Total logic as the logic of coercion and threats

affirms paradox as a life principle that also includes death in it, as an icon of totality. Total logic is like that because it allows totality to reveal itself in all its radiant brilliance, because it conceives of and affirms the totality of all possible statements simultaneously. Total logic is genuinely political logic – in equal measure both paradoxical and orthodox.

(Ibid.)

Formal logic excludes paradox, and Hegelian dialectical logic assumes a historical transcendence or removal of paradox. But

total logic is an open logic that recognizes both thesis and antithesis and excludes no one. Dialectical materialism functioned as an exception of exception. It recognized any oppositions. It strove for absolute openness and accordingly excluded anything that did not want to be just as open.

(Ibid.)

Consequently, the Stalinist state

was a state apparatus that implemented the translation of philosophical language into action [...]. It was precisely a matter of the supremacy of language; after all, only through the mediation of language could a philosopher force this apparatus to obey him and implement its activities on behalf of the whole. In classic monarchies the legitimacy of power was guaranteed by the body of the monarch – or rather by the lineage of this body. In the same way, the power of a fascist leader is legitimated by the racial lineage of his body (in this respect, fascism is a democratic variant of monarchy). As distinct from these, the body of a communist leader is irrelevant to his powers. The legitimacy of his power is assured only by the fact that he thinks and speaks more dialectically, that is, more paradoxically and totally, than everyone else. Where this linguistic guarantee of legitimacy is lacking, the leader sooner or later loses legitimacy.

(Ibid.)

The 1950 linguistic discussion was a triumph of this totality, and it demonstrated the full ideological reversibility of Stalinism: two diametrically opposed schools – Marrism and Indo-Europeanism¹⁰ – were in the first and second halves of one and the same year interpreted in absolutely opposite ways. Literally the same things for which in April 1950 Marrism was officially extolled (academic rigor,

Marxism, patriotism) and Indo-Europeanism was discredited (academic laxity, idealism, cosmopolitanism) changed places in July, when Marrism was indicted for academic laxity, idealism and cosmopolitanism. In such circumstances, it becomes pointless to speak of the ideological *content* of one or another school of scholarship, since any school can acquire the opposite characteristics, depending on the state of political affairs. Stalin's supradialectical logic signalled the end of any kind of 'dogmatism' and the arrival of a post-doctrinal era that made either the triumph of revolutionary-romantic, leftist Hegelianism (Lysenko) or its defeat (Marrism) irrelevant. Essentially, the very fact of Lysenko's ascent with the almost simultaneous rout of Marr was a convincing demonstration of Stalin's non-dogmatic thinking and of the political potential of his dialectical logic.

For Stalin the anti-Marrist campaign, as well as his support of Lysenko two years before that, were (like the majority of his decisions) purely political acts. Ideological arguments had long been purely instrumental, legitimizing underpinnings for one kind of political step or another. Accordingly, his 'views' had no relationship at all to the particular line he was supporting at a given moment. The marginal notes that he made in the summer of 1948 in the report that Lysenko had prepared for the biological discussion were published only in the 1990s. By Lysenko's assertion that any science is class-related, Stalin inserted several question marks and the taunting question 'Even mathematics?' (Rossianov 1993: 65). Nonetheless he lent his support to Lysenko's class-related biology, which he would 'win back' two years later in linguistics; Georgii Serdiuchenko and Fedot Filin would give him an excellent opportunity to speak out on this score.

Had they known about Stalin's remark, would they have removed their thesis about the class-awareness of science and language? (After all, mathematics and physics formulas are the same kind of language.) A full year after Stalin's foray, Filin publicly renounced Marrism and his former views, as did the majority of Marrists. Nonetheless, they were by no means any greater opportunists than Stalin or Marr himself. If for his own self-affirmation Marr had required not a class-oriented but a nationalist-oriented theory, he would not have written about classes, as he had not done before 1923. Had Stalin's political interests in the summer of 1950 come together differently, he would have tried to prove the class nature of linguistics (as he had done in philosophy in 1947, and in biology in 1948). As a rule, Stalin could argue for (and prove) whatever he wanted to, if it was politically expedient. Similar to the way in which Marr, when inventing prehistory and some sort of linguistic world, was actually engaged in therapy for his own complexes and traumas, Stalin, by means of supporting certain schools/trends in scholarship and culture and condemning others, was solving purely political problems. Politics had long ago become a sublimation of his trauma and need for projecting his own greatness. And the ideological arguments were only the rationalization of these needs – simultaneously the means and the arena for realizing them.

Thus Marr fell victim to politics, and not by any means to ideology. And if 'revolutionary science' was sanctioned in the Lysenko case but routed in

linguistics, it was not least of all because Stalin quite often elevated those whom he destroyed and then destroyed those whom he elevated.¹¹ A cold political logic always stood behind Stalin's apparent inconsistency. Some have noted the influence that the Lysenko affair had on the linguistics situation. But we must also see the reverse of this: Lysenko could easily have seen his possible fate in the rout of Marrism. This veiled threat (so that the 'winners' would not go too far) was a typical political move of Stalin's: frightened 'winners' are always easily managed. In the Stalinist world, no one was supposed to feel like an absolute winner or feel completely secure. Victory, as well as security, was relative, and this was the most significant source of terror.

No doubt, Stalin's participation in the linguistics discussion allowed him to consolidate his reputation as a theoretician and his status of coryphaeus of the sciences. After the 1938 publication of the *History of the All-Union Communist Party (of the Bolsheviks): A Short Course* (Komissiiia 1938), he had not published any theoretical works. After the war, the *Short Course* was officially attributed to Stalin: now all quotations from the book – and scarcely any other work could avoid citing it – appeared only in the form of direct attribution to him, such as, 'as Comrade Stalin pointed out in the *Short Course*...'. Among his formally listed published works after the war were merely two public speeches and a few decrees of the Defence Ministry, welcoming letters and telegrams, and maybe ten short replies to questions from foreign correspondents. Even before the war, Stalin's public appearances (that is, in newspapers) were extremely rare, and after the war they almost altogether ceased. Sometimes half a year could pass without a single public statement attributed to him. Against this backdrop, the 50-page *Marxism and Linguistics Issues* seemed like a real ideological eruption, and it provided fodder for many years to come.

This carefully calculated revelation of the Leader to the masses was so effective that it removed obvious questions – for example, why Stalin took up arms against Marr and his successor Ivan Meshchaninov, whom he himself had exalted. It is worth remembering that for his attacks, Stalin only wanted 'stars'. All of his ideological acts were directed at figures who were emblematic in their own domains – writers Akhmatova and Zoshchenko, film directors Eisenstein and Pudovkin, composers Prokofiev and Shostakovich. The peculiarity of the linguistics affair was that in all the previous campaigns such figures were available either at one extreme (like Akhmatova, Eisenstein or Shostakovich who broke out of the system) or at the opposite extreme (like Lysenko). There were no real leaders in linguistics at either extreme: neither the frightened Ivan Meshchaninov and Vladimir Vinogradov nor the storming and raging Serdiuchenko and Filin could aspire to this role, the first two because they were too cautious, the second two because their status was too low at the time. It was just this chasm that created the niche for Stalin's personal intervention (which would be repeated two years afterwards in the course of the economics discussion).

Stalin possessed the keen sensitivity of an actor and always accurately calculated the effect of his public interference into public life: among such effects one should include the demonstration of accessibility (he answers letters from

‘comrades’, readers whom no one knows), systematicness (prizes and honours exist separately from the Leader’s opinion) and objectivity (no one is above criticism). In the overwhelming majority of cases, Stalin preferred to solve problems behind the scenes, not only avoiding the abuse of his public appearances but also making them rarer and rarer, shorter and more enigmatic as the years passed.

Stalin’s discourse, his total logic, was the flip side of the totality of his power. At the heart of it was secrecy: total power is indeed secret power. Stalin’s logic is only at first glance transparent: in actuality, it is full of mysticism and ambiguity. Therefore, the full energy of a text from him is aimed at demonstrating the transparency of its arguments.

The main thing that Stalin demonstrated by his public intervention was that he was the one who determined the content of any area of knowledge. In other words, the demonstration of power becomes the meaning and the basic function of power. ‘Language as a means of communication between people in a society serves all the classes of society equally, and in this respect, it manifests a sort of indifference to the classes’, Stalin wrote. ‘But people, individual social groups, and classes are by no means indifferent to language. They try to use language to their own interests’ (16, 108) Stalin was definitely not indifferent. In Russian history one could scarcely find any another politician who succeeded in using language for his own interests with greater success.

Translated by Jesse Savage

Notes

- * This chapter is part of the AHRC-funded project on sovietization of Eastern European cultures during Late Stalinism.
- 1 All quotations from Stalin’s work come from Stalin 1997. Here and further in the text the volume and page numbers appear in brackets.
- 2 Here and further in all examples from Stalin’s text, italics are mine.
- 3 One of the closest Stalin’s associates, Secretary of the Central Committee responsible for ideology.
- 4 Stalin’s works replaced Marr’s theory and were proclaimed ‘new teaching’.
- 5 This wording also reveals Stalin’s purely bureaucratic vision of reality.
- 6 Georgii Aleksandrov was Head of the Party’s Central Committee’s Propaganda and Agitation Department in 1940–1947. From 1947 he was Director of the Institute of Philosophy of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.
- 7 Proletkult was an experimental Soviet artistic institution which arose in the post-revolutionary years and promoted ideas of class culture. It was weakened by Lenin in 1920 and disbanded by Stalin in 1932.
- 8 RAPP (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers) was a militant literary organization supported by Stalin during the cultural revolution and disbanded in 1932.
- 9 Lysenko was a biologist and agronomist who rejected genetics in favour of the hybridization and adapted it to a pseudoscientific movement termed Lysenkoism supported by Stalin.
- 10 Indo-Europeanism is a theory based on the notion of prehistoric Proto-Indo-European populations who had similar languages, religious practices and mythologies. Reconstruction of these peoples is based on linguistic evidence using the comparative method.

- 11 Examples of this were the restoration of the status of the composers Dmitrii Shostakovich and Sergei Prokofiev after they had become victims of the 1948 anti-Formalist campaign or, on the contrary, the public humiliation of the subservient writer Anatolii Sofronov after awarding him twice the Stalin prize.

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2 The Soviet gnostic

On the peculiarities of generic statements in Stalinist officialese

Petre Petrov

In this chapter I examine a dominant mode of official Soviet discourse, to which I refer as the ‘Soviet gnostic’. Defined in a preliminary fashion, gnostic statements are generalizing propositions that ascribe an essential property or regularity to entities, persons or occurrences. Such sloganized expressions as *Растет и крепнет партия Ленина и Сталина* [The party of Lenin and Stalin grows and gains strength],¹ or *Советский Союз борется за мир* [The Soviet Union fights for peace], may give us an initial glimpse of the cultural-linguistic phenomenon in question. Anyone possessing even a superficial knowledge of Soviet culture would readily attest to the highly typical nature of such pronouncements. Ex-Soviet citizens, as well as students of the socialist period in Russia, should be able to produce easily a series of similar formulas, either directly from memory or by ad hoc analogy. Despite the gnostic’s ubiquitous presence in Soviet discourse and its intuitively familiar ‘ring’, I am not aware of any scholarly attempts to isolate it as an intellectual topic or to research it at any length. This is a regrettable fact, for every time a prevalent linguistic structure is identified, there is also the promise that we might get a glimpse of how experience itself is structured (and here I take it for granted that the stuff of experience is not independent of its linguistic articulation). The present chapter is an initial pursuit of this promise.

After specifying the semantic nature of the Soviet gnostic, I will proceed to argue that it is an inherently volatile mode (at least in regard to well-established frameworks of semantic analysis); my claim is that official Soviet discourse operates in contexts that make it often impossible to distinguish between two basic semantic categories: those of ‘existential’ and ‘principled’ generalizations. The sequence of tasks just described accounts for the two-partite structure of the chapter. The first part will be devoted to getting a grip on the relevant terminology, as well as securing a theoretical background against which the peculiarities of the Soviet gnostic could be viewed and appreciated. I will discuss in brief some of the more influential treatments of generic propositions, pointing out, along the way, some of their liabilities. In the later part of the chapter, I will provide a series of examples from actual language use so as to flesh out the conceptual problems posed by the Soviet gnostic.

The linguistic material I will be presenting comes from issues of the political-theoretical monthly *Bol'shevik* – a sister publication of the daily *Pravda* – for

the five-year period between 1930 and 1934. The obvious reason for choosing the Party's main journal is its optimal proximity to the primary source of official discourse. The chosen time span is likewise emblematic: it is the period that sees the formation of a distinctly Stalinist order of discourse, most of whose formulas and ideologemes will be reproduced for many years to come. Since the patterns of expression I analyse are to be found operative throughout the Soviet period, I refer to their genus as the Soviet, rather than the Stalinist, *gnomic*. I do not place special argumentative weight on this phrasing, as only a meticulous historical investigation of official Soviet language will be able to show the exact nature and extent of transmissions from earlier to later periods. In the absence of such a study, my treatment of Stalinist discourse as a kind of prototype relies on both intuitive understanding and well-established scholarly custom.

The mode I call *gnomic* does not have a stable designation, or even a very determinate place, in linguistic literature.² It falls within a subfield of semantics that studies the so-called 'generic' phenomena of natural languages: words, phrases and propositions that express general meaning, abstracted from specific spatio-temporal coordinates.³ In this array of linguistic facts, the theory of generics distinguishes two principal domains, or levels: that of nouns and noun phrases (the lexical level) and that of sentences (the clausal level). The two are closely related, of course, yet they could be (and have been) studied in isolation from each other. My primary interest here will be with the meaning of full propositions, although the analysis will have interesting things to suggest about the semantics of individual nouns designating types.

Manfred Krifka *et al.* (1995: 2) give the following definition of generic sentences:⁴ 'propositions which do not express specific episodes or isolated facts, but instead report a kind of *general property*, that is, report a regularity which summarizes groups of particular events or facts'.⁵ On this definition – which, to note in passing, does not specify what it means for a 'regularity' to 'summarize' events or facts – the two sentences cited at the beginning of the chapter *could* be seen as generic. One – 'The party of Lenin and Stalin grows and gains strength' – unifies a set of facts under a general tendency, while the other – 'The Soviet Union fights for peace' – describes a habitual policy in international affairs. (As the discussion progresses, these cursory readings will be shown to be not quite adequate.)

If the definition just quoted gives the appearance that generic sentences constitute a uniform category, then the appearance is most certainly deceptive. On a closer look, one finds within this category various sub-kinds that differ according to the operative principle of generalization. Consider examples (1)–(6) supplied by Greg Carlson (2006: 18):

- (1) Glass breaks easily (a disposition)
- (2) Bishops move diagonally (a rule of a game)
- (3) Robert works for the government (an occupation)
- (4) Soap is used to remove dirt (a function)
- (5) A wise man listens more than he speaks (a moral injunction)

All these would qualify as generic sentences,⁶ but the source of genericity seems different in each case. Further possibilities are illustrated by the sentences below:

- (6) Mary smokes (personal habit)
- (7) John knows Russian (ability)
- (8) Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius (natural law)
- (9) Lions live in Africa (circumstantial generalization)
- (10) A bachelor is an unmarried man (analytic description)

The ten examples are sufficient to demonstrate that genericity on the clausal level has varied parameters and ‘accents’.⁷ This semantic polyphony is reflected in the various terms used to designate what is supposed to be a unitary phenomenon. While ‘generic sentences’ is the most widely accepted designation, terms such as ‘habitual’, ‘universal’, ‘gnomic’, ‘customary’, ‘dispositional’ and ‘general’ have also been used. Very often the choice of label has been influenced by the angle of approach that a particular author adopts.

My preference for the term ‘gnomic’, likewise, is meant to impose a particular ‘angle’ and thus delimit the broad and internally heterogeneous field of clausal generics. The usage I adopt follows, to some degree, that of Östen Dahl (1975), who finds it useful to distinguish between two types of generalizations: ‘accidental ... and nomic or law-like statements’ (99). The distinction derives from modal logic, where propositions can be formalized by using two types of operators: one for necessity and one for possibility. The former transcribes ‘law-like’ cases, while the latter – ‘accidental’ ones (Dahl 1975: 105). Where other authors have highlighted factors such as referentiality and spatio-temporal localization, Dahl’s use of the term ‘nomic’ serves to underscore ‘necessity’ or ‘lawfulness’ as the defining characteristic of generic sentences. Similarly, Pier Bertinetto and Alessandro Lenci insist that:

gnomic sentences do not express contingent statements about the actual world, but rather statements that need to be evaluated with respect to a contextually determined set of possible worlds or situations, the so called ‘modal base’ associated with the gnomic operator.⁸

(2012: 870)

This position, shared by other scholars,⁹ has direct bearing on a long-standing debate in semantics and the philosophy of language concerning what might be called the generation of generics.¹⁰ On one side of the debate are those who believe that generic values, in language as well as in thought, are the products of induction from actual (empirical) instances. On the other side stand those who see generics as operating on the basis of pre-given patterns, not unlike the rules of a game, which are anterior to any actual involvements with the ‘real world’.¹¹ Correspondingly, we obtain two diametrically opposed positions on what should count as the truth conditions of such statements: the former view implies that the validity of generic propositions is to be ascertained with reference to concrete events, situ-

ations and entities (seeing whether they in fact obey the kind of general condition that is being asserted); while the latter points us to 'structures', a kind of second-order objects, which exist somehow 'behind' directly observable phenomena and determine their unities and regularities. Carlson, who agrees with Dahl that the generic category should rest upon the notion of 'non-accidental' properties, points out that the first, inductivist, approach has no way of accounting for something like a principled state of affairs.¹² Another difficulty with the said approach is 'that some generics apply even if there are no instantiations of the predication' (Cook 2005: 120).¹³ The greatest problem with the second view (what Carlson calls the 'rules-and-regulations' paradigm) is its ontological indulgence: it populates the world with notional entities, to which the generic statements allegedly refer.

I do not intend to arbitrate in this controversy, which has far-reaching epistemological and ontological implications.¹⁴ Given the fundamental nature of the issues involved, it is doubtful that a resolution in favour of either party could ever be deemed even remotely conclusive. It seems to me that one need not pledge allegiance to the second view in order to appreciate its utility for particular analytic purposes. Stepping outside the framework of formal semantics, one might notice, for example, that instead of one World and one Language, there are multiple cultural worlds, each with its own 'universe of discourse'.¹⁵ And if, from this vantage point, it is observed that one such world behaves, and speaks, *as if* it were populated by essential structures that, subtending empirical happenings, coordinate these into meaningful constellations, this is obviously much less than issuing an open statement on the architecture of being or the fundamentals of human cognition. What I am suggesting is no more than this: that the official discourse of Stalinism projects just such a world, speaking in just such a way; and that, therefore, we need to be sensitive to the dichotomy of 'accidental' and 'principled' predications on which the rules-and-regulations approach is based. As for the term 'gnomic', it is meant as a linguistic signal enjoining us to exercise this sensitivity.

According to Dahl (1975: 101), the principal criterion for what counts as a principled generalization is the fact that it allows us to make predictions.¹⁶ He provides the following illustration: (11) 'My friends vote for the Socialists. Hence, when you have become my friend, you'll vote for the Socialists' (ibid.). The first sentence in the example can be read 'existentially', that is, as referring to the actual people that happen to be my friends. In other words, it offers an accidental, or 'descriptive', generalization. On the other, gnomic, reading, the sentence speaks of the normative paradigm (in this case, my political principles) that selects in advance those people with whom I might associate closely. Only on this second reading does the subsequent sentence make sense: since your political allegiance is a decisive factor, my friendship with you would automatically imply your prior commitment to the socialist cause. On the existential reading, no such inference can be drawn. The gnomic generalization sanctions predictions; the accidental does not.

Another way of describing gnomic expressions is to say that they predicate something on the *intension*, rather than the *extension* of a given noun or noun phrase (NP). Roughly speaking, the intension is something like an abstract entity

possessing all the essential characteristics denoted by the NP.¹⁷ The extension is the set of entities in the actual world to which the NP's intension can be said to apply. When I say, 'My colleague, Mirjam, is a linguist', I am not referring to two persons (who might meet under propitious circumstances): my friend and a certain linguist. There is only one person on the scene, since only 'my colleague, Mirjam' is a referring expression; only it has extensional denotation. 'A linguist', on the other hand, does not (nor does 'colleague', taken separately). A noun in a predicate position tells us for certain that we should understand it intensionally. The same understanding is in force also in (11), even though 'my friends' is in the position of subject: only if we take this as denoting the intension of a set ('my friends'), rather than the empirical set itself, could the subsequent statement function as a truthful prediction.

To maintain that this binary theoretical set-up illuminates an important aspect of generics is not to say that its deployment is unproblematic. First of all, one must live with the controversial epistemological implication that general, abstract states are somehow prior to individual, factual occurrences. This would imply that a sentence like 'The chicken laid an egg' is formally based on 'A chicken lays eggs' – a proposition for which the history of natural languages offers little support (Carlson 1995: 227–228). Another difficulty arises when one tries to get a grip on what exactly is meant by 'principled' conditions, and to determine how binding these should be in order to qualify as genuinely gnomic. This is the problem of the so-called 'weak' generalizations, which threaten – if admitted – to dilute the notion of 'non-accidental property',¹⁸ and if disallowed – to rule out many expressions that have been traditionally accepted as generic.¹⁹

Finally, there is the troublesome question of how to ascertain whether in generic sentences one is actually dealing with intensions. This, of course, is what the theory stipulates; yet to insist that a NP is to be interpreted non-referentially just because a true generic use calls for it, is to reason in a vicious circle. After quoting Dahl's definition of gnomic statements, Keith Allan (2001: 62) proceeds to question it:

The argument would be that only tokens of the genus can exist in any particular world w_i at time_{*i*}; the genus or type itself does not. Whatever the philosophical justification for such a view, the fact is that speakers of English treat some generics as if they do have extension.²⁰

An example he provides in support of this statement involves another animal species: '(12) There is *the kiwi*. It is a flightless bird. It inhabits New Zealand' (ibid.: 63). The second sentence instantiates an unambiguously generic context. Yet the indicative existential ('there is') in the first sentence implies, according to Allan, that it can be interpreted referentially (for example, during a lesson at the zoo).²¹ Since 'the kiwi' and 'it' are in an anaphoric relation (that is, they are coreferential), one is led to conclude that in certain contexts generic expressions may aim simultaneously at intensions and extensions, universals and particulars, types and their 'tokens'.²²

Closely related to the issue of referentiality (pertinent in regard to nominals) is that of temporal localization, or episodics (pertinent in regard to predicative expressions). According to the, again, binary model, predicates can do one of two things: either describe a specific happening (at a determinate time and place), or denote a property or a 'timeless' state of affairs. In the first case, one calls them 'episodic', while in the second, 'characterizing' predicates.²³ (The two labels can also be applied to the sentence as a whole.) 'Thus, being intelligent is a characteristic, but being on the corner is a happening; being a linguist is a characteristic, but being drunk is a happening' (Carlson 1980: 75).

In what is perhaps the most influential study of generics, Carlson's 1977 dissertation *Reference to Kinds in English* (published as a book in 1980), the author has furnished an account that ties in a very elegant way the two conceptual lines of referentiality and episodics. Instead of maintaining, on one side, the distinction of 'intension'/'extension', while keeping separate, on the other, 'happening' and 'characteristic', and then juggling these en route to determining what makes a statement generic, Carlson proposes a bold reduction. At a stroke, the cumbersome quintal scheme becomes a binary one: all one needs to speak of are 'individuals' and 'stages'. An individual is simply an intension thought of as an entity, which governs over concrete instances. (No particular emphasis is placed on human individuals. 'My teapot' and 'Africa' are also individuals.) By another stroke of unification, kinds – grizzlies, pink balloons, endless departmental meetings, and so on – turn out to be just higher-order individuals,²⁴ distinguished from their lower-level kin only by the fact that they can be found in different places at the same time (an impossible achievement for me or my teapot). A stage, on the other hand, can be understood as a temporally bound happening or state of affairs.²⁵ The important point is that the two terms are defined relationally, so that stages are simply the 'manifestations' or 'occurrences' of an individual (or kind) in concrete circumstances, while the individual is what mediates between the stages, ensuring their identity as stages of 'the same thing' (Carlson 1980: 67–68). For this reason, stages are said to 'realize' or 'localize' individuals in time and space. Once this neat scheme is set up, one is able to state in a strikingly succinct way the nature of both generic and existential propositions: generic are those statements that predicate something on individuals or kinds; existential statements, on the other hand, predicate something on stages (ibid.: 78). Thus, 'My dog is on the corner' is an existential sentence because 'be on the corner' is ascribed to a stage of 'my dog' rather than to him as an individual. In 'My dog is intelligent,' the opposite case obtains.

It is difficult not to admire the sophisticated simplicity of this model. Yet it too runs into difficulties when exposed to actual linguistic use. For although the functions involved in the analysis are greatly simplified, the choice is still between two options, which, in principle, exclude each other. Revisiting the example of the kiwi at the zoo (12), someone armed with Carlson's paradigm would have to say that in the first sentence we have a predication on a stage, while in the second, on a kind: a stance that would problematize the ontological

basis of coreferentiality. Alternatively, one has to maintain that the first sentence somehow splices the intuitions of a kind and a stage-of-a-kind into some sort of composite.²⁶ For this latter possibility, Carlson's monograph provides no theorization. The notion of 'realization' mediates between individual/kind and stage, but does it in such a way that each term remains in exclusive relationship to the other. By being realized, an individual ceases to be an individual, turning into something else altogether, namely, a stage.

The problematic territory I am trying to map out, spanning the interconnected issues of nominal reference and spatio-temporal localization, is exactly the territory on which the Soviet gnomic exhibits its peculiarities. Insofar as it does so not accidentally or occasionally, but in a ubiquitous and principled manner, it poses a serious challenge to the binary models just outlined. On the following pages, I would like to show that in this mode of official discourse there is inherent indeterminacy of meaning, a systemic oscillation between generic and non-generic interpretations.

At the risk of stating the obvious, I caution that 'indeterminacy' should be distinguished from 'ambiguity'. It is not uncommon for some sentences to allow both the particular and generic interpretations. This is especially true of languages like Russian, which lack some of the markings that aid in identifying non-generic usage (the definiteness of NPs, the progressive aspect of present-tense verbs). In cases of ambiguity, however, one anticipates that by a widening of the context a resolution in favour of one of the readings will eventually be reached. Here are two such cases:

(13) Соловей поет [The/A nightingale is singing/sings]

(14) Лора не понимает меня [Lora does not understand me]

These examples, which, in isolation, license both kinds of reading, simply postpone the moment when an adequate interpretation can be arrived upon. There is a tangible feeling that they have been plucked out of context. By expanding our view beyond the isolated sentence, we can reasonably hope to find out in regard to (13) whether it refers to a specific nightingale singing at the moment of the utterance or to a general characteristic of this avian species; and in regard to (14) – whether Lora has failed to understand something I have been presently saying to her (perhaps because of her poor command of Russian), or whether she is inherently incapable of appreciating the complexities of my character and principles.²⁷

Something altogether different happens in Stalinist official discourse. The uses I discuss below do not allow easy resolution by means of 'further context'. The aforementioned formal characteristics of Russian are pertinent, of course, as they do contribute to the sense of indeterminacy. And yet, they do not *create* it. Ultimately, the semantically uncertain nature of the Soviet gnomic has nothing to do with grammatical markings. It issues from the cultural-ideological environment in which Stalinist discourse operates, and the kinds of objects native to this environment.

Let us consider the following sentence, at first without the benefit of any wider context:

- (15) Миллионные массы голодают для того, чтобы кучка паразитов могла жить в роскоши.²⁸

(Kraval' 1932: 101)

On Carlson's model, we should be able to decide whether we are dealing here with a stage of the collective subject 'the masses' (and, likewise, of the 'handful of parasites') or not. Using conventional notation, the two alternatives can be represented as follows:

- (15a) Gn(starve)(masses)
or
 (15b) Ep(starve)(masses)

(15a) says that 'starve' is predicated on 'the masses' under a generic operator, while (15b) is to be read as placing the same predication under an episodic operator.²⁹ Since it deals with semantic values, this formalization does not say how these could be represented grammatically. It is understood that different languages will encode differently, in accordance with their significative means, a (universal) value such as 'Ep(starve)(masses)'.

I find that, in regard to (15), such a formal differentiation is untenable. This is because the reader has no easy way of deciding whether the sentence is about the nature of the capitalist system or about a current, ongoing state of affairs.³⁰ Not only are both readings possible, they are at play simultaneously. By reading 'episodically' one does not let go of the gnostic understanding. I submit that the proper way to read a sentence such as (15) is by holding onto both meanings, letting the universal 'come through' the particular. And the reason for this is not that the simple present in Russian fuses two modalities that in other languages may be marked off grammatically: the stative and the dynamic. Rather, it is about the 'model world' at which the proposition aims.³¹ The basic semantic value is at stake, not its grammatical encoding.

We can now turn to the larger context, which is supposed to arbitrate between the two possibilities, the episodic and the gnostic. It is one with which readers of the time were exceedingly familiar: the Great Depression. The story, told countless times on the pages of Soviet newspapers, can be abbreviated thusly: the deep economic crisis currently experienced by the capitalist countries of the West provides a stark demonstration of the incurable contradictions of capitalism. The particular article from which the sentence is excerpted is an economic survey that compares the situation of the working classes in the Soviet Union and the West. It analyses the last five years of economic development 'here' (*u nas*) and 'there' (*u nikh*), and adduces generous statistical data to illustrate its theses. The paragraph immediately preceding the quoted sentence provides figures on the distribution of income among social groups in the USA.

Constituting a self-standing paragraph (before the author begins discussing US military spending), (15) should be understood as a summation of the factual information just offered. But it would be a mistake to treat it as a purely existential summation. While it does inform us that real people are starving, at this very moment, in the United States, it also – and in the same motion – suggests that these happenings proceed from the very nature of capitalism. In other words, an ‘essential property’ of the bourgeois world is being ‘realized’ in the present. But this is nothing like the ‘realization’ that semanticists have in mind when speaking of the conversion of individuals into stages or types into tokens. In its temporal-spatial instantiation, capitalism does not shed its intensional nature. The token ‘masses’ that starve, as well as the token ‘parasites’ that exploit them, have not ceased being types simply because they have been ‘located’ in present-day United States.³² I will attempt to provide a preliminary explanation of why this is the case.

I believe that the deep semantic structure of (15) features an implied clause that could be rendered as: ‘We are witnessing that...’ or ‘It is being demonstrated that...’. When a gnomic statement operates under such a clause, the result is a compound of existentiality and genericity (or particularity and universality). Let us compose a more developed version of the same sentence:

- (15c) [We are witnessing that,] Under capitalism, the masses of millions starve, so that a handful of parasites could live in luxury.

The implicit part of the proposition is episodic, as well as deictic (it points our attention at an occurrence in the *hic et nunc*); in the English rendition, the part outside the brackets is unquestionably gnomic. The conjunction of the two does not mean that the gnomic intention is negated by the episodic, or vice versa. Both are sustained and inform each other.³³ I believe that in Soviet gnomic expressions, even when they come in the form of simple sentences, we need to read this kind of complex semantic syntax.

There are many instances in which such a demonstrative intention does not need to be inferred or hypothesized; it is articulated and appears on the very surface of the text, as in the following passage:

- (16) Действительность целиком подтвердила указания Ленина. Сплошная коллективизация обобществляет труд и средства производства товаропроизводителей [...], переделывает простые товарные производственные отношения в отношения социалистические. Тем самым кладется начало уничтожения классов и противоположности промышленности и земледелия.³⁴
(Voznesenskii 1932: 48)

After the initial sentence, there begins an account that may be understood as either a characterizing (and to a large extent, analytical) description of collectivization, or as a report on the ongoing process of collectivization in the Soviet

Union. Instead of giving us the key as to which interpretation is the proper one in this context, the opening statement reassures us that we do not have to choose. Its function is analogous to that of an introductory demonstrative clause. Without significant loss of meaning, we could paraphrase it as: 'Now we can plainly see that...'. And what are we supposed to see, then? First – the normative paradigm (derived from Lenin); and second – the contemporary reality in which the process of collectivization continues to take place. But we must see these two planes of meaning *together*, as one, for how else are we to appreciate that Lenin's words have been 'fully confirmed'?

What I called the demonstrative intention can be verbalized in a variety of ways. Consider the following example, which also treats the subject of collectivization:

- (17) И верно, что диалектика социалистического строительства всесильна. Недавний мелкий собственник-единоличник – сегодняшний колхозник под руководством пролетариата и его партии ударным трудом, социалистическим соревнованием переплавляется в активного и сознательного строителя социалистического общества.³⁵

(Rubinshtein 1933: 71)

The opening statement now asserts something like: 'The dialectic of socialist construction is not some abstract scheme devised by politicians or theoreticians. Its unmatched power comes from the fact that it operates in the real world today, and its workings are more than evident.' The next sentence, then, in describing the transformation of the former small proprietor, speaks simultaneously of the dialectic paradigm and its concrete workings. It must maintain this double focus, for its theme is precisely the 'evidentiality' of the paradigm, its demonstrability as such.³⁶

In the light of these observations, Carlson's theory of generics shows a significant liability. In particular, the notion of realization, which functions as a 'switch' between individuals and stages, seriously obscures the semantic nature of the Soviet gnostic, and thus calls for some kind of revision or supplementation. Without aspiring to build a whole new theory, I propose to relegate Carlson's concept to a subtype, and call it 'free realization'. We have a free realization when a stage is not asked to attest to the essential paradigm that defines the corresponding individual. For example, Соловей поет [A/the nightingale sings/is singing] will be unambiguously a stage-level, episodic, predication whenever, in the moment of the utterance, we are not concerned with confirming that nightingales are capable of singing. But, as I sought to show in the examples above, there is an abundance of instances in Stalinist officialese when this kind of confirmation is precisely what is intended. Therefore, it seems necessary to postulate another subtype, let us call it 'demonstrative realization', in which it is the individual, or kind, itself that makes an appearance in an 'episodic role'.³⁷ If one wished to formalize this latter situation, one would have to

devise some compound logical operator that expresses the meaning of ‘It is being demonstrated that...’. The formal representation of (15) would then be something like: $GnDm(starve)(masses)$. And this would be interpreted as meaning that ‘starve’ is attributed to ‘the masses’ within a generic-demonstrative function.

If by gnomic generalizations one understands – along with Dahl – statements that sanction predictions on the basis of a law or pattern of behaviour, then one should be able to account for discursive situations when one refers to the law while witnessing its action in the here-and-now. And if one intuition characterizes official Stalinist culture and the model world of its discourse, then it is just this sense of being (and speaking) ‘in the presence of the law’, of experiencing (and verbalizing) the concrete fulfilment of the prediction built into it. At the highest level, these are, of course, the allegedly objective laws of historical development to which the Soviet Union is subject, along with the rest of the world. But apart from this global perspective, there are more local and temporally restricted contexts that are likewise regulated by axiomatic patterns. Since the Party, guided by those same objective laws, formulates directives on the whole of political, social and economic life, there is no level of particularity that may be considered immune to gnomic generalization. The following pronouncements bear witness to the gnomic’s ubiquitous reach:

- (18) Рост народного хозяйства предъявляет все новые и новые требования к лампочке.³⁸

(Iurov 1933: 50)

- (19) В условиях обостренной классовой борьбы водка выступает как политический фактор.³⁹

(Angarov 1930: 23)

In the cases (18) and (19), alongside the existential interpretation, which tells us of a current situation in the country, we get the peculiar sense that the quality of light bulbs and the consumption of spirits are phenomena pre-programmed in some atemporal realm of axiomatic normativity.

One consequence that follows straightforwardly from the peculiarities of the Soviet gnomic is its inability to select between referential and attributive interpretations for the nouns subject to generalization. In other words, these uses do not tell us whether the nouns involved refer to specific or potential entities. The distinction between referential and attributive designations was made in a highly influential philosophical essay by Keith Donnellan published in 1966 (Donnellan 1997 [1966]). Against dominant theories of referentiality advanced by Bertrand Russell (1905) and P.F. Strawson (1950), Donnellan maintains that definite nouns and descriptions need not designate specific entities. In fact, in a great number of cases they designate, instead, merely a potential ‘carrier’ of the properties that are being predicated on the NP. Donnellan’s much-reproduced example is the sentence ‘Smith’s murderer is insane’, in which one has the

option of reading a description of a known person or of an unfamiliar perpetrator. In the first instance, the description relies on an ascertained or perceived condition of a person already identified; this corresponds to the referential use of the description 'Smith's murderer'. In the second instance, the diagnosis of insanity is predicated on a not-yet-identified someone on the basis of, say, the gruesome execution of the crime; this characterizes the attributive use (Donnellan 1997 [1966]: 364–365). Figuratively speaking, attributive propositions are linguistic nets cast to catch whatever, or whoever, fits the description.

Although Donnellan's argument does not target explicitly the realm of generics, its relevance for the latter is not difficult to demonstrate. Since gnomic expressions, in the strong sense, are supposed to deliver principled propositions and allow predictions on the basis of them, it could be argued that all one ever deals with in this discursive realm are potential entities and values. This is what Dahl has in mind when he states, in one place, that 'all generics are, in a way, about possible events' (ibid.: 104) and, in another, that 'they always involve quantification over possible objects rather than over actual ones' (ibid.: 108). His example involving friends and their electoral choices can be recalled here in order to see that, on the gnomic interpretation, 'vote for the Socialists' does indeed refer to a possible event, while those same friends form a no less abstract body circumscribed by the lines of political allegiance. It is a potential, attributive set, which we merely presume to correspond to actual human beings.

With this dichotomy in the background, it must be said that official Soviet discourse is replete with entities that lead a kind of shadowy existence on the borderline between abstraction and concreteness. As an illustration, I take one such entity – the kulak – in a sequence of thematically analogous pronouncements:

- (20) Классовый враг, посягая на колхозную собственность, пытается подорвать основы социалистического строя.⁴⁰

(Osinskii 1933: 115)

- (21) Классовый инстинкт кулачества толкает его на вредительскую работу, чтобы подорвать, ослабить базу социалистического строительства.⁴¹

(Syrtsov 1930: 47)

- (22) Кулак пытается бить по всем важнейшим устоям, социалистическим основам и преимуществам колхоза, делая ставку на выхолащивание социалистической сущности колхоза.⁴²

(Kosarev 1932: 38)

These statements, excerpted from different articles, have a common source in Stalin's thesis on class antagonism, first formulated in a speech of 1928. According to the infamous formula, in the final stages of class struggle in the Soviet

Union, as the socialist order is already celebrating its victory, the resistance of the defeated enemies becomes even fiercer, since they sense their inevitable demise (Stalin 1949: 168–172). In Stalin's vision, class character works on an instinctual, quasi-physiological level, unconditionally activating these 'former people' (*byvshie liudi*) against the proletarian state.

In all three examples we have generalizations, but whether these should be taken as summing up existing conditions or postulating principled ones cannot be decided. Accordingly, the ontological status of the 'class enemy' – appearing now as a species individualization (*кулак* [kulak], *враг* [enemy]) and now as a collective singularity (*кулачество* [the kulak class]) – remains indeterminate. The statements are undoubtedly attributive, since no true Stalinist could object to a prediction like the following: 'A class enemy in the countryside will seek to damage or steal kolkhoz property and thus undermine the foundations of the socialist order'. At the same time, they function perfectly well as generalizing reports on presently observed instances involving existing kulaks. And it is precisely the simultaneity of gnomic and existential readings that saves these from being purely tautological constructions. For it is clear that the kulak is defined in advance as a nature essentially opposed to the nature of socialism; so when one proceeds to say that the kulak would tend to act against socialist construction, this merely explicates something already given in the definition. We are able to tease some non-circular meaning out of these statements only if we take it that the kulak is acting out this tendency in actuality, that he is not only a type but also a token.

Because the two discursive modalities are so closely interwoven, it is not uncommon for the same noun to change its modality within the same sentence, showing now a gnomic, now an existential face:

- (23) Коммунист на производстве, на заводе, шахте, промысле, строительстве – боец передового участка фронта социалистического наступления, – и он должен являться подлинным вожаком масс, действующим в первую очередь показом и примером подлинно-социалистического отношения к труду.⁴³

(‘Na poroge’ 1930: 13)

The semantic contortions performed here are truly spectacular. The locatives in the first part of the sentence ('in production, in the factory', and so on) weigh heavily in favour of the existential reading; this is also required under the threat of tautology (since 'communist' already implies 'a member of the vanguard'). But then, after the dash, the weight suddenly shifts to the other side, as the imperative *должен* [ought, *masc.*] announces the provenance of the gnomic. The end result is logically impenetrable. If the empirical Party member is enjoined to become a leader of the masses, this means that he is currently not in the vanguard (for what else is a vanguard if not a leading detachment?); thus, the first part of the sentence is negated. If we try to save it by supposing that our communist was an intensional figure from the outset (the Communist), an even greater

nonsense ensues. For how can someone urge a notional entity to become what it already is?! It would be no less strange if one were urging a mammal to adopt sexual reproduction.

There is no reason, of course, why one should expect Stalinist discourse to make sense in each given instance. But one may venture to explain why logical infelicities of this kind are likely to occur. It is because the official gnostic is a fundamentally fluid mode, constantly threatening to spill into the existential realm, that a writer of middling skill may lose track of his own ontological perspective.

Since this dynamic is operative everywhere in Stalinist officialese, it operates in the other direction as well. That is to say, generalizing statements that – to all appearances – have an empirical source, promise at any moment to congeal into axiomatic paradigms. The following two examples come from an article on shock labour in the collective farms, which appears to be summarizing facts the author himself has witnessed.

- (24) Ударник вносит в колхоз социалистическую дисциплину труда. Характерной чертой сельскохозяйственного производства до последнего времени являлась растрата рабочего времени; ударник в колхозе начал уплотнять рабочий день. Ранняя запряжка скота, сокращение перерывов «на закур» – вот за что с первых шагов взялся ударник.⁴⁴

(Rubinshtein 1933: 61)

The level of detail in this passage is such that it does not allow for anything but an existential interpretation. The use of the past tense points to the same conclusion. And it is precisely because of this existential ‘leaning’ that, after reading it, a speaker of Russian may not be able to suppress a smile. For the very form of the singular noun, *ударник* [shock-worker], just like *кулак* [kulak] or *классовый враг* [class enemy], is too closely associated with gnostic environments. Its use in the present context produces a semantic grotesque (as in English, the plural would be the normal choice if one wished to speak of empirical regularities). One cannot help but think: what if the essential paradigm defining in advance what a ‘shock-worker’ is, was such that it reached all the way to the most minute details of the quotidian, prefiguring even things like tolerance for smoking breaks? What if the attitude to harnessing were a non-accidental property of this peculiar human kind? In such case, the following should count as a reliable prediction: ‘If X is a shock-worker, X will make sure that kolkhoz horses are harnessed as early as possible’?

That these are in no way far-fetched or flippant suggestions is shown to us just a couple of pages further into the article, where we find the following declaration:

- (25) Колхозник, став ударником, *не может* равнодушно относиться к непладкам в своей бригаде, в колхозе. Ударная работа *по самому*

своему существу ликвидирует это равнодушие, унаследованное от раздробленного единоличного хозяйства. Она *требует* от ударника энергичной борьбы с неполадками в колхозе.⁴⁵

(Rubinshtein 1933: 63)⁴⁶

The words I have highlighted clearly indicate that this meditation has nothing to do with lived or observed experience. We are in the realm of Stalinist ideological axiomatics, where there are only essential paradigms and their deductive ramifications. We understand now that ‘to become a shock-worker’ is not about performing work of a certain quantity or intensity; it is about taking on a particular essence. The mechanism is exactly the opposite of what our pedestrian understanding might expect: it is not because of one’s actual exertions that one is considered a shock-worker. *Au contraire*: it is insofar as one embodies the essence of socialist labour that one is able to work with a certain dedication, intensity and so on. From that – truly mystical – moment when someone ceases to be an ordinary collective farmer and turns into a shock-worker, the normative paradigm takes over. It acts through him. It ‘demands’ of him a certain way of life, which is, from that moment on, the only way possible (or else he would simply not belong to the kind ‘shock-worker’). And so we are compelled to go back and re-read (24), insofar as our initial impression of it proves to have been erroneous. It now seems quite plausible that it was indeed the ‘very essence of shock work’ that regulated the behaviour of exemplary kolkhoz farmers down to the habits of harnessing and smoking. Should we consider the description as non-referential, after all?

I think this question is very difficult to answer for as long as one maintains a rigid opposition between attributive and referential mechanisms, or between generalizations based on existing regularities and those based on normative properties. In official Stalinist culture, these categories are not polarities; they can be found in dynamic interaction, so that, on one hand, principled conditions are ‘witnessed’ in actuality and, on the other, observed facts and events are ‘raised’ to the level of norm, and contribute new content to the intensional paradigm. The last examples illustrate well this to-and-fro relay. The author, of course, knows that an entity like the shock-worker *must* exist (for it is presupposed by the very existence of the Soviet Union and, more specifically, by the new character of labour under socialism). And so he sets out to find ‘whoever fits the description’ of this entity. His testimony assures the reader that the species exists in actuality and that its principal characteristics are, in fact, operative (and not mere ideological inferences). He certainly intends to provide also new, more particular information, based on his personal experiences. But since this happens in the general context of what I called demonstrative realization, the particulars enter the gravitational pull of the gnomonic and are instantaneously transformed. They begin to oscillate between eventuality and norm.⁴⁷ Because the token shock-workers, once discovered, are assumed to be exhibiting the general species’ behaviour, even accidental circumstances (for example, some person, in some kolkhoz, has distinguished himself by harnessing animals earlier than the rest of the collective) may be taken to somehow follow directly from the species’ essence.⁴⁸

The observations made apropos of reference have direct bearing on the issue of localization. The thesis that nouns in the Soviet gnostic have uncertain reference implies that entities and events (understood broadly) have uncertain placement in space and time. In a neatly dichotomous perspective, these should either have a determinate localization or exist in an atemporal no-place. Indeed, what can be more sensible than seeing things as being either present or not? If it is true that gnostic generalizations aim at potential objects and happenings, then one must make the next step and say that 'potentiality' is not really a place. And so, from this perspective, a sentence such as (26) should have only one reading:

- (26) Темпы и масштабы научной деятельности при социализме поднимаются на огромную высоту, объективное значение науки и ее общественный вес колоссально возрастают.⁴⁹

(Osinskii 1933: 115)

Especially without a context, this passage favours heavily the gnostic reading. To accept this as the only possibility means that we commit ourselves to understanding the adverbial phrase *при социализме* (under socialism) in a purely theoretical sense: 'under the conditions characteristic of the socialist order'. But this is most definitely not how the phrase was intended in the early 1930s. For socialism did not exist in the Soviet Union of that time merely in the realm of abstraction. It was also something that was perceived as taking place there and then. Accordingly, we would not be betraying the overall semantics of the statement if we took account of this connotation and translated: 'Presently, the tempos and scale of scientific activity are rising to an enormous height, etc.'. Once again, the gnostic and episodic meanings are co-active.

There is an entire host of expressions that, when employed in Stalinist discourse, acquire the same kind of inner duality. Temporal indicators are especially susceptible to it, since the allegedly scientific laws governing historical development have an internal diachronic dimension. Therefore, it is often impossible to determine whether a statement is referring us to this 'systemic' temporality or to empirical, lived time. Cases in point are the ubiquitous references in Soviet texts to 'periods,' 'stages' and 'phases':

- (27) За обостренной классовой борьбой и бешеным сопротивлением классового врага оппортунисты не хотят видеть происходящих огромных классовых сдвигов в СССР в направлении полного уничтожения классов. Современному этапу пролетарской революции соответствует также широкое развитие новых форм социалистического труда, все большее вовлечение масс в работу государственного аппарата, повышение культурного уровня масс и выработка новых пластов кадров руководителей социалистического строительства из рабочих и крестьян. Оппортунисты совершенно не понимают и этих массовых сдвигов.⁵⁰

(*'Bol'shevistkoe nastuplenie'* 1930: 3)

Since the opportunists are accused of unwillingness to see, we are justified in assuming that the phenomena to which they are wilfully blind are 'there to see'; in other words, these phenomena are to be found in the empirical present. The assumption is confirmed by the dynamic verb *происходящих* (taking place). Following this momentum gathered from the initial sentence, we are inclined to read *современный этап* (the contemporary stage) along the same semantic lines. But the verb *соответствует* (corresponds) should give us pause. To our sense of temporal orientation, a construction like the following would have been much more amenable: 'On the current stage of the proletarian revolution, new forms of labour are coming into being'. This would have kept us anchored in the ongoing present. Instead, we enter the static time of the theoretical paradigm, segmented as it is into discrete stages, to each of which a certain determinate content 'corresponds'. Notice also that, while the opening sentence blames the oppositionists for not *seeing*, the concluding one upbraids them for not *understanding* – another indication that we have switched registers somewhere along the way. Having come to the end of the passage, we cannot be sure what we have been told. Is it that 'A certain stage of socio-economic development presupposes processes x, y, z ', or that 'Presently in the Soviet Union processes x, y, z are under way'? By the same token, are the oppositionists guilty of not seeing actual transformations taking place in their country or of not grasping the principled 'correspondence' (that is, the theoretical implication)? As I have suggested already, it is not a matter of choosing between two incompatible perspectives, but of adopting a kind of double vision, an 'understanding seeing', which is able to perceive simultaneously the paradigm and its concrete manifestation.

I wish to emphasize that I do not see these discursive situations as idiosyncratic. Even less do I deem them 'illogical' in any strict sense of the word. They simply do not conform to certain entrenched paradigms of thought. All this means that a new way of thinking is called for; a different conceptual lens is needed in order to see why official Stalinist discourse produces such putative idiosyncrasies as a matter of course. And I do not find it in the least unusual that the encounter with a particular cultural world and its discourse should prompt us to devise a special new lens. This chapter was devoted more to illustration and semantic analysis than to theoretical elaboration. My primary goal was to map out the problematic area and to document the features of its landscape through textual examples. The notion of demonstrative realization, which I advanced in the course of the discussion, should be taken more as a place-holder than a self-standing theoretical statement. It marks off a fascinating cultural and epistemological space where normative universality commutes with existentiality. It indicates that a conceptual synthesis is in order, a supplier kind of mediation, which would allow us to see a single motion where, hitherto, only mutually exclusive semantic states have been perceived. However, to adequately explore this terrain, to properly carry out the mediation, would require a new beginning. The full implications of the Soviet gnostic, not merely as a linguistic modality but also as a paradigm of cultural consciousness, can be revealed only when one moves beyond the limits of semantics proper and ventures onto the grounds of philosophy, cultural history and ideology.

Notes

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- 1 Here and further, all translations from Russian are mine – PP.
- 2 For a discussion of the unstable terminology on generics, see Cook (2005: 118–120).
- 3 For a comprehensive introduction to the main issues in the theory of generics, see Krifka *et al.* (1995).
- 4 The authors prefer to designate these as ‘characterizing’ sentences.
- 5 Emphasis in the original.
- 6 On this occasion, Carlson refers to these as ‘habitual’ sentences, noting that the designation is potentially misleading.
- 7 One of the most challenging problems for semanticists and philosophers of language has been to determine how exactly the generic meaning comes about. On this issue, see Carlson (1989).
- 8 As can be seen, both terms, ‘nomic’ and ‘gnomic’, are used in the literature. ‘Gnostic’ has broader currency in linguistics, as it is the name of a grammatical aspect attested in several languages. Bertinetto and Lenci (2012: 863) define ‘gnomic imperfectivity’ as an aspect used to ‘express a law-like generalization, taken to represent a characterizing property of an individual or class of individuals’. This usage is adopted also in Carlson (2012) and Boneh and Doron (2008). Dahl (1975) speaks of a nomic tense – something most scholars would find problematic or misleading, inasmuch it is generally agreed that generic values are independent of tense. Dahl himself notes that nomic statements can be formulated apropos of present, but also of past and future times (1975: 103). On this issue, see Ultan (1978: 87) and Cook (2005: 117). On the use of the gnostic aspect in the Greek present, aorist and future, see Smyth (1920: 421, 428, 431) and Goodwin (1897: 53–56). Rogland (2003: 20–21) distinguishes two senses in which the term ‘gnomic’ is used: as a formal and as a semantic description. In the formal sense, it refers to proverb-like statements. Used as a semantic description, it refers to generic propositions. It is the latter meaning that is relevant in the present context.
- 9 See Goodman (1955); Lawler (1973); Burton-Roberts (1976, 1977, 1989); Kratzer (1981); Krifka *et al.* (1995); Boneh and Doron (2008, 2010). Burton-Roberts (1977) distinguishes between generic statements proper and what he calls ‘generalizations.’ The former predicate something on intensions and are expressed in English through sentences featuring the singular indefinite noun phrase (NP); the latter generalize over existing instances, and are rendered by constructions featuring either plural NPs or definite generic NPs.
- 10 For the following abbreviated account, I draw on Carlson (1995).
- 11 The major philosophical presence behind the latter theory is, of course, the Wittgenstein of *Philosophical Investigations*.
- 12

The world contains in its extension all manner of possible patterns and convergences, many of which we judge to be purely accidental, but other of which we take to be principled. Only the principled patterns are taken to support true generics. There is no obvious way that any inductive approach operating on real instances to derive inductively driven generalizations can make this distinction, yet it is central to any account of the truth of generics. This is where the rules-and-regulations approach, which insists on there being some real, non-episodic conditions of the world to support the truth of generics, would appear to offer a promising avenue of explanation.

(Carlson 1995: 233)

- 13 For a useful discussion of this and other liabilities of the inductivist approach, see Bertinetto and Lenci (2012: 868–869).

- 14 The problem on which the debate centres hearkens back to the philosophical confrontation between David Hume and Immanuel Kant. Hume's sceptical thesis had denied the possibility of absolutely certain cognition, since all our generalizations are based on collections of empirical eventualities. No matter how great our collection gets, we can never say that such-and-such an effect will follow *necessarily* from such-and-such a cause. Kant's rebuttal was that we can, and do, have access to absolutely certain knowledge, since experience is always-already invested with the transcendental structures of human cognition. When we think we encounter a world independent of us, we are really encountering our own forms of understanding and intuition. Our knowledge can be certain not because it conforms to facts 'out there', but because it accords with principles through which facts first become facts. Those whose 'driving intuition is that our generic sentences express inductive generalizations underneath it all' (Pelletier 2010: 62) proceed in the spirit of Hume; they look to the real world in order to ascertain the validity of generic propositions. Those who adopt the competing perspective proceed in the spirit of Kant; they look to see whether what is asserted in the predicate is contained in the notion of the subject.
- 15 See note 30.
- 16 Goodman (1955: 20–21) offers a very similar formulation: '[W]e might say that a law is a true sentence used for making predictions'.
- 17 An intension, then, should be distinguished from a concept: 'Concepts are cognitive entities, and intensions are what the concepts are concepts of' (Allan 2001: 50).
- 18 One may think of a statement such as 'Mary dyes her hair black,' which certainly describes a regularity of behaviour, yet makes it difficult to categorize this as a non-accidental regularity.
- 19 On this problem, see Carlson (1995: 228–229).
- 20 Allan (2011: 63) goes on to assert that the only truly non-referential category in English is that of the *a(n)*-indefinite (as, for example, in 'A cat has a tail'). The generic properties of the indefinite singular are treated at length in Burton-Roberts (1976, 1989).
- 21 The behaviour of predicates after the indicative existential has been analysed in Milsark (1976: 127–135). He points out that the there-insertion imposes a restriction such that 'state-descriptive' predicates are allowed ('There are people *sick*'), while 'property' predicates are ruled out (*'There are people *intelligent*').
- 22 The proposal to treat the basic intensional elements as 'types', while their extensional counterparts – as 'tokens' is advanced by Jackendoff (1983).
- 23 An analogous distinction is that between 'stative' and 'dynamic' propositions: 'Stative sentences express a *property* of the subject referent; dynamic sentences report an *event* in which the subject referent is involved' (Krifka *et al.* 1995: 16, emphasis in the original).
- 24

When we look at the notion of individual in this particular light, it is not a difficult task to apply the same sort of thinking to kinds of things as well [...]. A kind of thing, then, is that whatever-it-is that ties a series of stages together to make them stages of the same thing. It is in this sense that a kind is to be regarded as also being an individual.

(Carlson 1980: 68)

- 25 For the concept of 'stage', Carlson draws on Quine (1960).
- 26 Krifka *et al.* (1995: 85) discuss an analogous situation at the zoo, this time involving a lion, after which they venture the following hypothesis:

One way to explain [how an expression can refer to both the species *Leo leo* and the particular lion in the cage] might be to assume an ontology where it is possible that a kind is in some way 'identical' with the objects, or with collections of objects, that belong to it.

As I will show further, something of this peculiar ontology is characteristic of the model world of Stalinist discourse.

- 27 In this latter instance, the possibility exists that an actual present instance confirms what I know to be principally the case. Then the sentence has a meaning that can be paraphrased as: 'Look [what did I tell you?!], Lora does not understand me'. This situation corresponds to what I will later refer to as 'demonstrative realization'.
- 28 The masses of millions are starving/starve, so that a handful of parasites could live in luxury.
- 29 See Krifka *et al.* (1995: 21–22), where the authors propose an episodic operator, *Ep*, as a counterpart to the generic operator, *Gn*.
- 30 Certain instances of the so-called 'reportive present' in English can approximate the semantic flavour of the Soviet *gnomic*. A news headline like 'Technical innovations increase efficiency, lower costs' uses a generic mode to report on a concrete state of affairs.
- 31 The notion of 'model world', or 'world of discourse', accounts for the fact that in concrete situations utterances cannot be said to relate directly to objectivity, pure and simple (that is, to *the* world). Communication is mediated by models of reality that are specific to times and places. The notion covers not only such obvious cases as fictional constructions (for example, in sci-fi novels), but virtually all linguistic performances, inasmuch as these cannot be free from ideological, ethical or, broadly, cultural inflections. See Allan (2001: 20–21).
- 32 On the notion of 'located individual', see Barwise and Perry (1983: 74–87).
- 33 Something similar occurs in the hypothetical episode at the zoo, as the opening demonstrative ('There is the kiwi') gives way to a *gnomic* description ('It is a featherless bird').
- 34 Reality has confirmed fully Lenin's directions. The all-out collectivization is socializing/socializes the producers' labour and means of production [...], transforming/transforms the simple commodity relations of productions into socialist relations. In this way, a start is given to the destruction of classes and the opposition between industry and agriculture.
- 35 And so it is true that the dialectic of socialist construction is all-powerful. Yesterday's small private proprietor, today's kolkhoz farmer, under the guidance of the proletariat and its party, through shock work, socialist competition, is (being) re-forged into an active, conscious builder of the socialist society.
- 36 An anonymous reviewer of this chapter has brought to my attention the following sample of ideological discourse from a different cultural-historical context:

Let me remind you, Sir, that an Englishman loves his country, and prefers her interests before that of all the world. – Does an Irishman do so? Look to the other side of the House, and the question is answered. The Englishman glories in the pride and honour of his country – the Irishman steals into favour with the enemies of Ireland by degrading and enslaving her.

(Anon. review 2013)

This parliamentary oration moves from a *gnomic* assertion to its demonstration in the here-and-now ('Look to the other side of the House, and the question is answered'). The two intentions – to provide a characterizing description and to confirm the asserted truth by example – are clearly delineated. This makes the statement similar to (16) and (17). And yet, I find the peculiarity of the Soviet *gnomic* to lie in the fact that the two meanings, the generic and the demonstrative, *need not be* set apart syntactically, as discrete statements or clauses. In the majority of cases I discuss, these meanings are co-active within a single proposition. This is another way of saying that (16) and (17) are meant heuristically: they help isolate semantic aspects that are very often fused in Stalinist ideological discourse.

- 37 This is quite similar to the ontology proposed by Krifka *et al.* (1995) on the example of a caged lion; see note 26.
- 38 The growth of the national economy is placing/places ever higher demands on the light bulb.
- 39 In the conditions of aggravated class struggle, vodka is becoming/becomes a political factor.
- 40 By laying a hand on kolkhoz property, the class enemy is attempting/attempts to undermine the foundations of the socialist system.
- 41 The class instinct of the kulak class is driving/drives it towards harmful activity, with the goal of undermining, weakening the basis of socialist construction.
- 42 The kulak is attempting/attempts to assault the most important mainstays, the socialist foundations and advantages of the kolkhoz, hoping to hollow out the socialist essence of the kolkhoz.
- 43 The communist in production, in the factory, mine, industry, construction, is a fighter of the vanguard of the socialist offensive, and he ought to be a true leader of the masses, acting, first of all, through the demonstration and example of a truly socialist attitude towards labour.
- 44 The shock-worker is introducing the socialist discipline of labour into the kolkhoz. A characteristic trait of agricultural production until recently was the waste of working time; the shock-worker in the kolkhoz has begun consolidating the working day. The early harnessing of draught animals, the shortening of interruptions 'for a smoke' – these are the first things that the shock-worker has taken upon himself.
- 45 The kolkhoz farmer, having become a shock-worker, *cannot* be indifferent to the shortcomings in his brigade, in the kolkhoz. Shock work, *by its very essence*, eliminates this indifference inherited from the fragmented private-farm ownership. It *demand*s of the shock-worker energetic struggle with the shortcomings in the kolkhoz.
- 46 Emphasis added.
- 47 In this sense, it is difficult to see how one could apply Carlson's distinction between instances 'expressing a regularity' and instances 'from which one infers a regularity' (1989: 167).
- 48 Many analogous examples can be found in the same article – a veritable compendium on the typical behaviour of the shock-worker:

Ударники разоблачают попытки лжеударников перевыполнять нормы за счет снижения качества. (62)

[(The) Shock-workers are unmasking/unmask the attempts of false shock-workers to over-fulfil production norms at the expense of quality.]

Ударник первый остается ночевать на стану, он больше, сильнее других «болеет» за колхоз. (64)

[The shock-worker is the first to stay for the night at the field camp, he cares for the kolkhoz more than the others.]

Ударник, выступая против кулацкого агента, лодыря, разгильдяя, как острым оружием пользуется пером. (67)

[In opposing the kulak agent, the loafer, the slacker, the shock-worker is using/uses the pen as a sharp weapon.]

- 49 The tempos and scale of scientific activity under socialism rise to an enormous height, the objective importance of science and its social weight increase colossally.
- 50 Behind the aggravated class struggle and the vicious resistance of the class enemy, the opportunists do not want to see the enormous class shifts taking place in the USSR

and leading to the complete elimination of classes. To the contemporary stage of the proletarian revolution corresponds also the broad development of new forms of socialist labour, the ever-greater involvement of the masses in the work of the state apparatus, the elevation of the masses' cultural level, and the creation of new layers of leading cadres of socialist construction from among the workers and peasants. The opportunists completely fail to understand these massive shifts.

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3 Aesopian language

The politics and poetics of naming the unnameable

Irina Sandomirskaja

Circumlocution, euphemism, silence: communication in the time of persecution

Vladimir Nabokov once wrote: ‘In Russia the censorship department arose before literature; its fateful seniority has always been in evidence: and what an urge to give it a tweak’ (Nabokov 1963: 264). It was, indeed, only during very short spells of time throughout the 300 years since the birth of the Russian literary language that the censor was not there to participate in the process of symbolic production. Freethinking individuals always attempted to challenge censorship – or could not resist, to use Nabokov’s expression, ‘the urge to give it a tweak’. Affecting all forms of public expression without exception, censorship was not only implemented by appointed officials but also performed through the so-called ‘inner editor’: self-censorship, a form of cultural competence that belonged to the writers, their experience and intuitive knowledge in the process of writing as to what kind of utterances can or cannot be accepted by the future censor. In this sense, public speech became a complex process dominated by the implied presence of the third interlocutor, invisible, almighty and omniscient. The speaker therefore invented ever-new, oblique ways of naming the unnameable, while the listener learned new ways of interpreting them. Reading what has never been written, listening to what has never been said, or writing and reading between the lines, came to constitute unalienable components of communication. In the Russian and Soviet traditions, these skills are known under the name of Aesopian language.

In this chapter, I will present just a few cases illustrating some of the innumerable ways of organizing communication under the sign of (sometimes imagined) persecution. I will consider various interpretations of the culture of Aesopian circumlocution in Kornei Chukovskii’s studies of nineteenth-century democratic literature and its struggle against the censorship; in Anna Akhmatova’s reconstructions of Pushkin’s cryptography (*tainopis’*) and their transformation, in turn, into a cryptography of Akhmatova’s own history; in Lydiia Ginzburg’s analysis of the political implications of Aesopian language as a strategy; and in Lev Losev’s aesthetic interpretation of the undermining potential in Aesopian language. Taken together, these cases demonstrate how complex the Aesopian

games of political euphemization are, and how ambiguous their outcome is, both in terms of their intentions and results, the subjectivities that they produce and, most important, its politics. The politics of Aesopian language especially are difficult to ascertain, its double meanings and camouflage producing a grey zone of uncertainty, vacillating between the mutually exclusive poles of resistance and collaboration, between challenging the power of censorship and conforming to it – in what appears to be one and the same linguistic gesture. I will be discussing these problems in the context of the theories of political language proposed by Herbert Marcuse, Pierre Bourdieu, and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, thus seeking to inscribe the Russian/Soviet phenomenon of Aesopian language into an international critical and theoretical context. Finally, as a way of indicating an even broader perimeter of engagement, I will gesture to a view on Aesopian language from the context of the philosophy of language. To this end, I will use epigraphs from the work of Samuel Beckett, which speaks so powerfully to the political, ethical and aesthetic challenges of naming the unnameable.

One cannot discuss Soviet technologies of power without understanding the forms of symbolic violence practised by the Soviet state. Nor can one capture them without accounting for the resistance that administrative violence confronted on the level of what Michel Foucault called the microphysics of power, whether in everyday speech or in literary and artistic practices. Aesopian language, this specifically Soviet phenomenon, has received insufficient attention by historians and theoreticians of culture. Yet in the USSR it was handed down from one generation to another, its complexities increasing with time, to form a unique language culture that, in a way, created a community among its speakers, while remaining opaque for the outside observer. Manipulating ordinary words so as to make their meaning transparent to the friend and impenetrable to the foe, the Soviet speech subject sought to arrange a channel of authentic communication in between, or through the forms of, inauthentic official language. The widespread practice of Aesopian communication demonstrates that the seemingly monolithic *lingua Sovietica* was in fact a porous aggregate full of discontinuities and loopholes, ringing with multiple vernaculars, giving satisfaction and enjoyment in linguistic creativity, and supporting a never-ending dialogue among almost inaudible dissident voices.

In a fragment from her *Memoirs*, Nadezhda Mandel'stam describes an episode of communication under police surveillance. During the war, while in evacuation in Tashkent, she found employment at the university. The wife of an enemy of the people, and followed by the NKVD, she was surrounded in Tashkent by students who were recruited, or had volunteered, to spy on her and other teachers. Under the circumstances,

the word 'writing' acquired an additional meaning. Referring to a group of successful candidates [of sciences], an old scholar [...] told me: 'They all write' [...] When [...] I worked with Usacheva at the university in Tashkent, we did not [have to] look for snitches because *everyone* was 'writing'. And we would exercise our skills in Aesopian language. In the presence of

doctoral students, we would raise the first toast to those who had given us our happy life, and then both the initiated [in the secrets of Aesopian language] and the doctoral students would invest it with the meaning they needed.¹

(Mandel'stam 1970: 40)²

To deceive the snitches, she and her colleagues reverted to 'Aesopian language'. Raising a toast 'to those who had given us our happy life', she counted on the secret agents taking her words at face value as 'the meaning that they needed' to write their reports. At the same time, secretly addressing 'the initiated ones', she hoped they would perceive the other meaning in her words, that is, the irony, an unuttered statement about the unbearability of living surrounded by denouncers and traitors.

As the fragment above illustrates, Aesopian language invents, among other things, ad hoc semantic inversions. 'An old scholar [...] told me: "They all write" [*oni vse pishut*]'. The intransitive *pishut* is used here to imply that neither the speaker nor the listener need to supply a grammatical object for the verb in order to understand to whom, what, and about what the students write (that is, denunciations to the NKVD that implicate their teachers). Normally, such an intransitive use of *pisat'* would refer to creative literary work, either professional literary activities, or endeavours to become a writer. The irony in *pishut*, as the word is used by 'the old scholar', is that it signifies an equally fervent dedication to serving the repressive state. When these students write [*pishut*], they seek to consolidate their careers by combining ideologically acceptable scholarship with anonymous letters to the police.

Another specificity of Aesopian language exemplified in the excerpt by Mandel'stam is its use of silences: raising a toast to Stalin, she relies on 'the initiated' to be able to hear in her words exactly what she is not saying. Further, Aesopian language is not a system but rather 'a skill', in speaking as well as in listening: in the toast to those 'who gave us our happy life', 'the initiated' are expected to be skilful enough to understand that it has to be interpreted in some other sense, as a sign of communication under censorial control, and as a subterfuge to distract the vigilance of potential denouncers.

What is special in the case of the Soviet Aesopian language is the fact that it never remained just one secret code among others but, handed down from generation to generation, evolved into a complex culture. Practising Aesopian speech in politically sensitive situations, the Soviet intelligentsia continued the traditions of the nineteenth-century democrats, who first made a systematic political use of circumlocution. One of them, Nikolai Chernyshevskii, programmatically declared euphemization to be a political weapon in a letter to a contributor to *Sovremennik*: 'It is impossible to speak directly, we will appear to be talking about extraneous matters, as long as these are connected with the idea' (cited in Lotman 1956: 509).

Aesopian language has always represented an ambiguous, highly uncertain means of communication, giving its practitioners equally ambiguous identities

and uncertain subjectivities. Whether ironically mimicking the language of power, writing between its lines, or carnivalizing it in folklore; whether seeking loopholes in its written and unwritten codes or trying to give an innocent look to subversive statements, Soviet speech subjects knew perfectly well what kind of power and what kind of dangers they were facing when 'tweaking' the system of censorship. In devising Aesopian strategies, one knew that they were not only punishable but also capable of backfiring. While teasing the censor by delivering a message from under the censorial radar, the writer could contribute to the subverting of the prevailing order. At the same time, he or she invariably confirmed this very order by the mere choice to take part in the game. From here issue the political and theoretical dilemmas of Aesopian language and the unending debate about its value as a means of resistance, its ethics, and its legitimacy as a political instrument or as a cultural arena for dissent. In what follows, I will discuss Aesopian language in the light of this ambiguity and uncertainty. I will outline a history of the Soviet concept, providing some examples of how it was deployed, with an emphasis on the ways the theorists and practitioners of Aesopian language themselves related to their practice. In the concluding section, I will attempt to inscribe the Soviet polemic around Aesopian language into the context of Western theories of language, subjectivity and power, especially in what concerns its aesthetics and politics, as well as its value as a means of empowerment.

Aesopian language as partisan war: political circumlocution and strategic pretence

...you always overlook something, a little yes, a little no, enough to exterminate a regiment of dragons.

(Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*)

As already mentioned, the double message contained in an Aesopian utterance presupposes the presence of a double audience: those who take it at face value and those who are 'initiated' and can discern the dissenting undercurrent beneath its conformist surface. In an episode from Chernyshevskii's *What is to be Done*, this peculiar communicative situation is presented in a conversation between Dmitrii Lopukhov, Vera Pavlovna and her mother. The mother is suspicious and curious about her daughter's friend:

Is your sweetheart beautiful? – Of extraordinary beauty. – Has she a dowry? – Not at present, but she is to receive an inheritance. – A large inheritance? – Very large. – How much? – Very much. – A hundred thousand? – Much more. – Well, how much, then? – There is no occasion to say, it is enough that it is large. – In money? – In money also. – In lands perhaps as well? – And in lands as well. – Soon? – Soon. – And when will the nuptials take place? – Soon.

(Tchernuishevsky 1886: 64)³

Responding to the mother's interrogation – or rather appearing to respond, since in his replies he only echoes the questions – Lopukhov is, in fact, speaking to Vera Pavlovna. She is to understand that he is not talking about a 'sweetheart' but about the emancipation of peasants, a political cause to which Lopukhov, as a revolutionary democrat, is deeply devoted. An 'initiated' listener, Vera Pavlovna is capable of eliciting the message that Lopukhov is sending her over the head of the controlling mother, and enjoys his manner of 'tweaking the censorship':

Verochka at first had difficulty in suppressing a smile, but little by little it started appearing to her – how did it start to appear to her? – no, it cannot be true – yes, it is true! – that Lopukhov, although replying to Maria Alexevna, was not talking to Maria Alexevna, but to her, Verochka; that he was laughing at her mother while talking seriously and speaking the truth to her, Verochka, and only to her. Was it an illusion on Verochka's part or was it really so?

(Tchernuishevsky 1886: 65; translation modified)⁴

This fragment from Chernyshevskii became a school textbook example in Soviet literary history (Lotman 1956). Remarkably, it was Soviet official literary historians, themselves working under censorial surveillance by Glavlit, that legitimized and publicized Aesopian language in their academic writing, presenting it as a main weapon of democratic revolutionary struggle in the nineteenth century. Kornei Chukovskii was one of those scholars who wrote consistently about the pre-revolutionary practices of Aesopian language among the Russian democrats, underlining its role as a form of political conspiracy against power and describing Aesopian speech as if it were partisan warfare [*partizanskoe primenienie ezopovoi rechi*] (Chukovskii 1966: 685). As early as 1932, he published an article about the use of cryptography by Vasilii Sleptsov (1836–1878), a minor and not very successful author, but an interesting personality from the circle of Nekrasov's *Sovremennik* (1967a, 1967b).

Arguing that Sleptsov was more than just another graphomaniac, Chukovskii represented him as a writer who had *chosen* to write exclusively in Aesopian language. It was hard to deny Sleptsov's far-too-obvious writerly inconsistencies and failures. Chukovskii construed them – albeit not quite convincingly – as evidence of Sleptsov's radical politics, as a sacrifice of artistic beauty to revolutionary truth. Sleptsov's awkward turns of phrase and clumsy narration, Chukovskii maintained, bore witness not to his lack of literary talent but to the ruthlessness of the tsarist political censorship, which forced Sleptsov to express himself in Aesopian speech. By representing his hero as an ardent revolutionary, Chukovskii was trying to secure a place for him within the Stalinist canon of Russian nineteenth-century literature. And yet, not just aesthetically but also politically, Sleptsov still fell short of the Soviet standard of 'progressive' literature. Therefore, Chukovskii was compelled to represent Sleptsov's ideologically suspect opinions as an Aesopian cryptography, a strategic 'pretence' for the sake of 'conspiracy':

Of course, in the interests of political secrecy [*konspiratsiia*], Sleptsov ... was forced to obscure his thought to such an extent that many readers interpreted them as utterly retrograde [*mrakobesnye*], but for the one who would be able to decipher his cryptography, his revolutionary logic would become absolutely obvious.

(Chukovskii 1967b: 289)

Note the 'of course' – a curious marker of Chukovskii's awareness of censorial control over his own writing. Note also the function of this 'of course' in fitting the 'correct opinion'. Finally, note the oxymoronic structure of the argument: what looks utterly retrograde is in fact revolutionary; conservatism and obscurantism are only 'pretence', and should be interpreted as a cryptic sign of progressiveness. Even Sleptsov's bad style turns out to be the effect of political dissimulation – not a manifestation of writerly weakness but an act of cryptographic camouflage. According to official Stalinist doctrine, the liberal 1861 reform was against the interests of the peasants; this, Chukovskii declares, is Sleptsov's 'real meaning' as opposed to the false appearance of bad style; Sleptsov might have been an unsuccessful writer, but he was a fighter for social justice and truth, even though in a verbal disguise:

It is only because of the intimidating censorship (*tsenzurnoe pugalo*) that the episodes above were given a sense of incoherence and a look of apparent randomness (*iakoby sluchainyi kharakter*), while in actual reality they all hit the same point, all cry out about one and the same fact. With the help of those seemingly disconnected episodes, Sleptsov achieved a systematic and methodical survey of all most remarkable phenomena of the social life of that time, and each of those phenomena he measured with the same measure: whether it was useful for the working peasants.

(Chukovskii 1967b: 294–295)⁵

Aesopian speech, according to Chukovskii, is not occasional word usage, but the weapon of 'revolutionary writers' in conditions of censored press and 'a powerful means of the political education of the masses' (Chukovskii 1966: 720, 705). Twenty years later, in a chapter from *Masterstvo Nekrasova* [Nekrasov's Mastery] (Chukovskii 1966: 680–722), describing the political use of language and the role of Aesopian speech among the *Sovremennik* circle, he proclaimed that their political circumlocutions were comparable to the methods of partisan warfare. Identifying one Aesopian strategy, Chukovskii described it as 'an unexpected, rapid attack, a surprise blow against the unsuspecting enemy'. A successful pun, an *anekdot* or a *bon mot* could be used as such a 'weapon', too. Yet of greater significance was the large-scale and long-term strategy of linguistic partisanship, with a political agenda underneath: 'a regular, many-year war, a long-term attrition of the enemy forces on the basis of a stable and complex strategy' (Chukovskii 1966: 681). Nekrasov's political cause in *Sovremennik* was, apparently, a partisan war of the second type, with a systematic strategy, and the use of Aesopian speech was part of it.

Chukovskii stressed that in Nekrasov, as in Sleptsov, Aesopian speech was not an occasional witticism or a game of words, but 'a *system* of hints, understatements, circumlocutions, and metaphors' (Chukovskii 1967b: 263).⁶ He therefore made an attempt to formalize Aesopian speech as a system via a taxonomy of its devices (*priemy*). At the basis of his systematization is the dualism of the fake (appearance) and the real (meaning). Aesopian language, with its system of linguistic camouflage, masks, and diversions, acquires the character of war manoeuvre. Among its methods, Chukovskii included: a socially relevant motif pretending to be a piece of intimate lyricism; an original utterance pretending to be a translation from a foreign language; a displacement in geography; an intended anachronism; hiding an important message among a mass of orthodox utterances; omission or understatement (*umolchanie*); and – the most difficult to identify – the production of utterances whose 'apparent meaning' would be diametrically opposed to the 'real meaning' (cf. Mandel'stam's toast, above). Such were also, according to Chukovskii's strategic but far-fetched explanation, Nekrasov's tactics of literary partisanship: for the sake of revolutionary propaganda, the poet Nekrasov systematically *pretended* to be religious. Even his unmistakably Biblical, priestly turns of phrase, like 'angels of mercy or the worldly goods', did not correspond to how he 'sincerely felt' but only served as blinds to distract the attention of the censor from the 'real meaning' of his verse, which consisted in a call to revolution (Chukovskii 1966: 720).

This latter Aesopian 'device' in Chukovskii's nomenclature is especially exciting: 'making deliberately wrong statements (*zavedomo nevernye vyskazyvaniia*) that would be diametrically opposed to the author's convictions'. This strategy, Chukovskii maintains, graphically demonstrates

the greatest unity between the leaders of the democratic revolution and the reading public (*massa*) of the 1860s. They [the leaders] were so certain to receive sympathy and understanding from those whom they were addressing month after month, that, when it proved completely impossible to get some idea through the censorship, the authors offered it to the reader in an inverted form, since they were sure that the reader would guess that he should read it inside out (*naoborot*).

(Chukovskii 1966: 712)⁷

Even though Chukovskii's account of Aesopian communication 'inside out' appears far-fetched, still, as I will argue below, there is justification for giving the central role in it to the reader.

In this chapter of his work on Nekrasov, Chukovskii returns to Sleptsov again, seeking to increase Sleptsov's reliability in the eyes of the censor. No matter how much Chukovskii tried to domesticate him for the Soviet literary household, Sleptsov was without a doubt a peculiar historical figure, not easily compatible with the Stalinist literary pantheon. In between the lines of Chukovskii's eulogies to Sleptsov, the heroic fighter of a linguistic partisan war, there emerges another Sleptsov: an anarchist bohemian of the Baudelairean kind, a

lifestyle artist, and an experimenter in revolutionary forms of socialist communal living. According to a memoirist (Panaeva 1927), Sleptsov was a Russian Fourierist, a feminist and a bohemian dandy who shocked the St Petersburg society by founding his famous commune in 1883–1884, one of the first experiments in everyday life directly inspired by Chernyshevskii's new family in *What is to Be Done*. Members of the young democratic intelligentsia, both men and women, lived there and adopted anarchic communal life styles. As rumour has it, these featured dissoluteness and sexual experimentation. Chukovskii had to stretch his argument considerably to make such a figure acceptable not only to the ideological censor but also to the moral palate of Stalinist Victorianism (Chukovskii 1967a).

Aesopian language communicating history: a self-referential punctuation

...I still the teller and the told...

(Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*)

Chukovskii's interpretation of Sleptsov appears naïve and over-determined at the same time, unless one assumes the role of the 'initiated' reader and supposes that Chukovskii's study about Aesopian language is an Aesopian construction in its own right. In that case, this biographical study of an obscure author from the previous century reveals a self-referential layer of meaning. Trying too hard to construct an alibi for the dissolute Sleptsov for the eyes of the Stalinist censor, Chukovskii at the same time could hope that his readers were familiar with the history and would not be deceived by his patent misrepresentation of Sleptsov's identity. If one applies Chukovskii's list of Aesopian 'devices' to his own narrative, the story about Sleptsov and his circle becomes a portrayal in disguise of Chukovskii's own circle. Like Maiakovskii, *the* poet of the generation, Sleptsov had 'stepped on the throat of his own song', made a sacrifice of his poetic gift to politics, and by an act of political will reduced his writing to 'cryptography':

from the forgotten short newspaper articles by the young Sleptsov, written in cryptography, which is only possible to decipher now [that is, in the Soviet Union of the early 1930s], one can see, how great was the revolutionary tension (*nakal*) of his thought.

(Chukovskii 1967b: 224)

Chukovskii was not the only one to use his academic writing as a medium of encrypted self-referential messages. Especially in the late 1920 to early 1930s, when free historical discussion became impossible, literary historians continued thinking about their time and the fate of Russian literature almost exclusively in allegories, allusions, understatements and circumlocutions. Grigorii Gukovskii's history of Russian eighteenth-century literature (1999 [1939]) was a study of Russian Classicism with a focus on literary sociology and literary politics, and,

among other issues, on problems of censorship. His description of various modes of 'censorial circumlocutions' (*tsenzurnye inoskazaniia*) in eighteenth-century poets suggest an Aesopian code that relates Russian Classicism to the academic circumstances of the Soviet 1930s, a time when former Formalist critics, now employed in centralized academic institutions, were compelled to adhere to official doctrine.⁸ For instance, Gukovskii's description of French Classicism could be read as a faithful depiction of the early Stalinist state and culture immediately prior to the abolition of independent artistic unions and the introduction of socialist realism:

At that time in France, absolute monarchy, according to Marx, acts 'in the capacity of a civilizing centre, the grounder of national unity' [creating] an all-state, all-nation art. The central theme and idea of Classicism is the cult of etatist and civic virtues to which Classicism sacrificed man's personal aspirations. Lying in the foundation of the ideology of the new unity of the state was the requirement of strictest discipline, the submission of all subjects to the absolute force of state power. Man as a personality, in its difference from other people, in his private aspirations, desires and passions, was from that vantage point considered to be a phenomenon not only devoid of value but even as if it did not exist at all. The only valuable and truly existent fact of social life was society itself, and the state, which not only united all citizens but also apparently even absorbed them.

(Gukovskii 1999 [1939]: 112–113)⁹

Note the devices Gukovskii uses to deflect censorial attention, devices we can easily trace to Chukovskii's list cited earlier: a quotation from Marx to legitimate the statement; a faraway country (France); a different time (the eighteenth century). The implied addressee of Chukovskii's manipulations in 1932 was probably a functionary of RAPP (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers), whose ideas of political correctness would have been as straightforward as Chukovskii's attempt to impart legitimacy on Aesopian language. In 1939, when the Stalinist cultural establishment was already firmly ensconced, Gukovskii's implied reader was more sophisticated culturally and better informed in terms of literary history – as was also his censor.

If Gukovskii was indeed projecting the eighteenth-century situation in France onto the Stalinist state and literature of the 1930s, he appears to have done it on theoretical grounds, motivated by a specific philosophy of history, inviting a dangerous allusion and suggesting an unwelcome historical explanation. The historical 'then', on the one hand, and the 'now' of the time of the writing, on the other, seem to reproduce each other in a recognizably Formalist vein: actuality becomes a parody of history, one epoch 'rhyming' with the other. Thus, in a return of Formalist theory (by that time already disallowed in public discussion) as a metapoetics of history, 'new' historical configurations evolve to structurally reproduce 'old' ones. History reproduces itself in a Nietzschean 'eternal return', and not in a Marxian dialectical synthesis (Kujundzic 1997: 25–60).

A similar Aesopian gesture, revealing a parody in history, is to be found in Yuri Tynianov's 1928 novel *Smert' Vazir-Mukhtara* [The Death of Vazir-Mukhtar] (1959), a story of how the post-Decembrist intelligentsia of the nineteenth century adapted to the political reaction under Tsar Nicholas I. An intellectual of Tynianov's time could identify with her predecessors of the nineteenth century, who worked within the Nicholaevan state bureaucracy while attempting to remain true to themselves. In the opening chapter of the novel, Tynianov makes a remark about the disappearance from the public scene of the 1830s of 'the people of the 20s with their springing gait' [*liudi dvadtsatykh godov s ikh prygaiushchei pokhodkoi*] (Tynianov 1959: 9). This could be read as a historical statement and, at the same time, as a portrait of the Silver Age generation with its dilemmas in the face of the cultural politics of the early Stalinist state.¹⁰

A unique mode of using Aesopian language as a means of creating a critical self-reflective commentary and inscribing it between the lines of historical scholarship was invented by Anna Akhmatova. She developed it in a series of academic essays about Pushkin written between the end of the 1920s and the early 1960s (Akhmatova 1977). A supreme master of circumlocution and a poet who knew the art of writing 'a mirrored script' with 'invisible ink' ('Poem without a Hero'), Akhmatova used her analysis of Pushkin's artistic and civic politics to supply her scholarly texts with an additional layer of encrypted autobiographical allusions, ellipses and hints. Her systematic use of self-referential circumlocution in historical writing was not this writing's by-product, but its cardinal method.

In her discussion of (Pushkin's) cryptography (*tainopis'*), which she discovered in his fragments, Akhmatova treated it as a gesture by which the poet, surrounded by surveillance and betrayal, reclaims the autonomy of poetic imagination and desire. Compared to Chukovskii and Gukovskii, Akhmatova's notion of the political is expanded to claim also sexuality, desire and private life for the domain of autonomous subjectivity. As distinct from the conspiring revolutionary, who knows exactly what he means while speaking about 'extraneous matters', Akhmatova's poet is not in full control of his cryptography. *Tainopis'* arises through a combination of political protest and the revolt of repressed desire. Confronted with political censorship and moral censure, the poet finds a resolution in a radical gesture of poetic autonomy – in Pushkin's case, his suicidal duel (Sandomirskaja 2013b: 301–318).

Akhmatova's analyses of Pushkin were received by Soviet literary experts as high-quality scholarship, but they also became a record of many years' reflections about her own poetic destiny and the fate of her generation. She started writing the cycle at the end of the 1920s, when by a special decree the Party forbade the publication of her poetry; but most of it was produced later on, during the campaign against the Leningrad literary magazines, which made Akhmatova an outlaw, physically restrained her under home arrest, and suspended her life under a constant threat of imprisonment. In this dramatic episode she saw direct parallels with Pushkin's last days before the duel; in between the lines of her Pushkin cycle, she was commenting on her own situation. Her

method of doing so was comparable to Gukovskii's: projecting the moment of her 'now' in the late 1940s backwards onto Pushkin's 'then' of 1837. The dilemma of the poet in Stalin's literary establishment thus tacitly reappeared in the allusions and parallels to a similar dilemma of another poet under another police regime. In her interpretation of the poet's personality and poetry, she rejected the optimistic, transparent, folksy and morally sane Pushkin of the Stalinist literary canon. Instead, her Pushkin was a poet of understatements and obscurities, a man struggling against police control, betrayal and family scandal, a master of Aesopian speech who expressed himself in a fragmented way, in subversive circumlocutions with far-reaching political, aesthetic and ethical implications (Sandomirskaja 2013b: 319–337).

Both Gukovskii and Akhmatova constructed Aesopian subtexts by punctuating their narratives with invisible quotation marks and intertextual arrows. They were addressing the experience and competence of their reader, gently leading the reader through a labyrinth of historical and literary allusions, structural similarities and unarticulated parallels. Following such delicate punctuation, the reader would gradually arrive at a point from which the narrative would open up simultaneously onto two perspectives: the 'then' and the 'now', the 'other' and the 'self'. The story would unfold simultaneously in two modes, as a written and an untold one. These two perspectives should converge at the moment of reading, the 'now' reconstituting itself vis-à-vis the 'then'; the superscripted 'self' receiving a temporal dimension and a political legitimation from the historical truth of the underlying 'other'. This was a way to subvert the hegemony of the official language by communicating a historical judgement, and the responsibility for such a judgement was entirely the reader's.

Aesopian language communicating the joys of dissent: sensitivity and circumlocution between the po(litical) and the po(etic)

Decidedly, this evening I shall say nothing that is not false, I mean nothing that is not calculated to leave me in doubt as to my real intentions.

(Samuel Beckett, *Malone Dies*)

Let us recall the secret communication between Lopukhov and Vera Pavlovna: 'little by little it started appearing to her [...] that Lopukhov [...] was only] speaking the truth to her, Verochka, and only to her' (Tchernuishevsky 1886: 65). The double purpose in an act of using Aesopian language is to distract the censor while alerting the sympathetic reader to the presence of the 'false bottom' in an apparently innocent statement. Both tasks make appeal to the sensitivity of the reader. In order to understand, the reader/hearer must look away from, or through, what she reads or hears. She must possess the active sensitivity that would enable her to hear what has not been uttered or to read what has not been written. Again, Aesopian language is more than conspiracy: it is also an aesthetic formed in the game of speaking politically, in which exchange of meaning

occurs thanks to a shared sensibility of dissent. Such a sensibility seeks pleasure and togetherness in inventing innovative uses of language, in order to create a critical distance from the language of hegemony, an alternative symbolic space to share in an act of forbidden interchange. Political dissidence uses language to create a space for itself 'to sit apart' in language (*dissidence*, from Latin *dissidēre* 'to sit apart, disagree' (OED Online)). The art of using Aesopian language – whether in production or in reception – thus unites its users in a community of shared attitudes, a community of those seeking to 'sit apart' from the official language; a togetherness of dissenting sensibilities and dissident speech.

According to Joseph Brodsky (1995: 472), 'Disguise is the mother of literature and censorship might even claim its fatherhood'. Lev Losev, a literary scholar and a poet, a dissident who emigrated from the USSR in search of freedom from the censors, gave his study about Aesopian language in Russian literature the ironic title *On the Beneficence of Censorship* (Loseff 1984). Yet Brodsky, a close friend of Losev and principal source of his inspiration, probably did not revert to irony in asserting censorship's rights of 'fatherhood' (cf. Nabokov's comment above on the 'seniority' of censorship over literature). Brodsky also developed a peculiar apolitical politics of poetry: he

liked to say that the only thing politics and poetry had in common were their first two letters. [...] His apoliticism lay not in an avoidance of political issues but in his refusal to see them in any other way than *sub specie aeternitatis*.

(Loseff 2012: 140)

In his treatment of Aesopian language, Losev shared Brodsky's (and Akhmatova's) conviction that only a poetic event in language, not overt verbal partisanship, is effective against the banal evil of censorship (Loseff 1984: 16–18, 220–221). A vulgar politics of writing, whose only goal is to evade censorship, would be beneath the poet's dignity; thus Brodsky would consider the strategies of Chukovskii (or Chernyshevskii, for that matter) to be a waste of the poet's time. In Losev's view, poetry was political in a different sense: through the cathartic effects of its forms. What constitutes the truly Aesopian language, according to Losev, is not a political but aesthetic agenda: an Aesopian expression is effective due to its carnivalesque nature, to the 'comic catharsis' it produces in the audience (Loseff 1984: 221–222). The difference between Aesopian language as political weapon and as an aesthetic phenomenon, Losev explained, is analogous to the distinction between pornography and erotic poetry:

artistic systems (Aesopian language and erotic allegory) and those which are extra-artistic have different subjects and different aims. The artistic are directed at psychological results, at kindling in the reader an experience of purification; the intended result of the non artistic systems is not psychological, but either physical – an erection – or political – an insurrection.

(Loseff 1984: 227–278)

Losev rejected the idea that an Aesopian expression is only valid when it alludes to direct political action. He also rejected Chukovskii's simplistic understanding of form as mere pretence, as nothing but calculated camouflage with the only purpose to provide a vehicle in the contraband of the subversive truth (Loseff 1984: 220–221).¹¹ Pressing further in the direction of Brodsky's provocative dictum about censorship engendering poetry, Losev claimed that such political reading robs poetry of its autonomy by reducing it to the skill of calculating effects. An experienced user of such calculated Aesopian names knows how to slip by political censorship and hit the focus of attention in the same way as a football player knows how to pass the ball through the opponent's defence and plant it right into the net (*ibid.*: 169–170). However, strategic calculation of effects is what censors, not poets, do; and someone who manipulates public opinion, a *frondeur* with a mandate from the authorities, is not a poet in the proper sense of the word. Balancing between official acceptance and disgrace, such a smooth operator would challenge the censors by taking liberties and experimenting at the very threshold of the forbidden, all the while knowing very well where its limit lies, ambiguous in his political principles and 'pragmatic in his loyalty to the ruling bureaucracy' (*ibid.*: 170).

Against such a manipulative trend in the use of political circumlocution, Losev defined Aesopian language as 'a literary system' (Loseff 1984: x), 'a style of styles', and 'a meta-style' (based on Shklovskii's *ostranenie* as the source of stylistic effect; *ibid.*: 250). Following the Russian literature from its earliest days, ever present in the relationship between the reader and the writer, the censor and censorship have become productive *aesthetic* factors in the evolution of writing (*ibid.*: x). Hence, Losev's ironic declaration of the beneficence of censorship for the creative process. For him, Aesopian language is not merely a sum of stylistic or rhetorical devices, but rather an overarching strategy in poetic creation that can involve anything from a felicitous choice of words to the construction of the plot of a novel, to devising a long-term literary mystification, to the occupation of literary establishments in the poet's interests (something Losev illustrates with episodes from Soviet children's literature and literary translation). It is due to Aesopian language's poetic inventiveness, and not to its direct partisanship, that an act of circumlocution, whether linguistic or paralinguistic, acquires its subversive political power.

Aesopian language in Losev's view was more than a strategy of subversive word usage: it was an aesthetic system and a lifestyle. Born in 1937 into a family of a man of letters, Lev Losev became a member of a young writers' association in the 1950s Leningrad, then a student at the department of journalism, a 'non-official' poet in the Leningrad literary underground of the 1960 and 1970s, and a *samizdat* reader and author. Just like other practitioners of Aesopian language before him, he was not an outcast in the official literature industry, and made his living at its margins writing books for children and plays for the puppet theatre. In the 1960 and 1970s, before his emigration to the United States, he was employed as an editor at the children's magazine *Kostior* – a non-spectacular, but quite comfortable official position (Losev 2010: 139–362).¹² All this is to say

that in *The Beneficence of Censorship* Losev was able to combine scholarly analysis with the witness testimony of someone who had been personally involved in the matters of Aesopian speech as its producer, its reader and even – in Losev's capacity as magazine editor – its censor. From this triple vantage point, the author of *The Beneficence of Censorship* provided his audience with a rare insight into the symbolic workshop of Aesopian language.

Losev held that, when seen from the point of view of information theory, Aesopian language is pure noise. A coded message implying, for instance, that Soviet censorship is not different from the tsarist Third Department, would contain no new information for the reader. Instead, making such a statement would be significant as a gesture. It constitutes a communicative event: a fact that everyone knew but was silent about until it thereby made an entrance into the public sphere. The point of the game is to make the censor believe that the subversive element is indeed mere noise, and not a message in disguise (Loseff 1984: 42–50). For the Aesopian reader, successful reception of such a message would also represent a little victory over the system: in spite of the system's overpowering might, the reader would have succeeded in perceiving and decoding the message and, thus, would have become a participant in a subversive symbolic act. Aesopian expressions serve as 'screens' (means of concealing) and 'markers' (means of signalling the presence of a secret meaning), but it is not easy to say which one is which. Thus, Soviet children's literature appears to have served as one such 'screen': it was full of Aesopian 'markers' enabling the adult audience to identify encrypted messages (Loseff 1984: 193–216).¹³ Another arena of, or 'screen' for, Aesopian language games was literary translation (Loseff 1984: 76–86).¹⁴ As an example of this latter, Losev offered a mystification produced by his father, the author Vladimir Lifshits, who in the late 1950s invented a fictitious foreign poet 'Dzhems Klifford' (James Clifford), and was lucky enough to have published quite a lot of subversive texts under his name before his trick of fake translation was uncovered (Loseff 1984: 76–80, Losev 2010: 319–331).

There is a difference, however, between Aesopian language in Losev's broad aesthetic meaning and conspirative circumlocution of the type proposed by Chernyshevskii (pretending to talk 'about extraneous matters') or ascribed by Chukovskii to Sleptsov (progressive thinking pretending to be obscurantism). Circumlocution in these latter meanings is, indeed, the equivalent of guerrilla warfare and can be interpreted on 'an analogy ... with coding and decoding which is practiced by underground movements or in espionage' (Loseff 1984: 217). Losev provides an example in which one dissident, talking to another on a tapped telephone, offers him a copy of Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* by referring to the book cryptically as *Ded Arkhip and Len'ka* [Granddad Archip and Len'ka] (the title of a story by Gorky). In such a linguistic invention, there is no additional aesthetic or poetic purpose, Losev observes: 'At issue is the concrete act of exchanging a concrete book. In espionage the situation is the same' (ibid.: 218). Yet, Aesopian language as an aesthetic phenomenon, according to Losev, has a different politics. It lies in the production of political enjoyment,

‘for catharsis is the inner content of an Aesopian literary work, a catharsis which the reader experiences as a victory over oppressive authority’ (ibid.: 230).¹⁵

Thus, the success of Aesopian language in Losev’s understanding is not in the contraband of subversive meanings under the camouflage of innocent forms. Rather, it lies in the creation of new exciting (because dangerous) aesthetic experiences, in the practice of alternative sensibility to be shared with the reader. This is a sensibility of dis-sent: the emancipation of the senses through a shared cathartic practice, challenging censorship in every domain of its authority, whether in verbal contexts, in artistic performance or in individual lifestyles. The beneficence of censorship lies in the fact that its unintended effects nullify its initial purpose: instead of eradicating, it elevates political dissidence into an aesthetic phenomenon and, on the other hand, it gives aesthetic expression the additional value of political subversion. Chernyshevskii’s Vera Pavlovna listening to Lopukhov ‘at first had difficulty in suppressing a smile’. By making public his act of ‘tweaking the censor’, Losev’s Aesopian poet/provocateur invites his reader to join him in the political enjoyment of sensual dissent.

Aesopian language and its uncertain subjectivity

Where I am there is no one but me who is not.

(Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*)

A shadow of doubt has hung over Aesopian language ever since circumlocution was first used as a means of political expression: Does the reader *really* understand the hidden message under the camouflage? And: Is Aesopian language *indeed* a means of subverting authority – or does it, on the contrary, confirm the power of authority by accepting the forms of legitimate language for the expression of dissent? After all, Aesopian language is ‘mere words’, not ‘actual deeds’. As a speech strategy, does Aesopian language *indeed* serve resistance or does it, on the contrary, manifest the speaker’s submission to the symbolic order? In other words, is it *really* the voice of truth, or is it in fact political silence hiding behind a verbal veneer? Connected with these uncertainties is the ambiguous status of the subject of Aesopian speech: is the act by which the subject exercises agency that of subversion or that of confirming the order, that of politicizing language or that of aestheticizing censorship by means of its poetic euphemisms?

One can see this ambiguity lurking even in the very word ‘Aesopian’. On the one hand, it refers to Aesop’s way of expressing his viewpoints on sensitive matters through allegories and fables, a way of speaking politically without using openly political language. On the other, it reminds us of Aesop himself, who was a slave; in this light, Aesopian language appears as merely a secret code for subalterns to share their fears, powerless, cowardly, and incapable as they are of an open expression of protest. It is in this latter meaning that Aesopian language was mocked by Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin (to whom, incidentally, the coining of the term ‘Aesopian language’ has been attributed; Loseff

1984: 1). Saltykov-Shchedrin himself referred to Aesopian speech practice as 'slave language' [*rabii iazyk*]. In his *Pis'ma k teten'ke* (Letters to *Ma Tante*, 1972 [1882]), he criticized the literature of his day, which strived for political impact through the use of euphemism while its broad readership was yet to master the skill of reading between the lines; as a consequence, the intention invested in the euphemism failed to achieve its emancipatory purpose.

To this, one could object: And what about the euphemistic language of the slaves! What about the skill of speaking between the lines? – Yes, I would answer, indeed, both of those peculiarities of literature were developed while literature was in captivity [under censorship], and both undoubtedly bear witness to literature's attempts at breaking through the enemy's ranks. But whatever you say, the language of the slave is the language of the slave, and nothing more. [People in] the street have never known how to read between the lines, and in relation to it the language of the slave did not have, and could not have, any enlightening significance. So if it was a victory, it was a very insignificant one.

(Saltykov-Shchedrin 1972 [1882]: 402)¹⁶

Lenin was similarly critical towards the use of Aesopian language, especially by his opponents, the Liberals, whom he accused of political double-dealing. In his article 'Party organization and Party literature' (1905), Lenin blames the legal press for betraying the interests of the proletariat and using Aesopian speech instead of assuming a principled position in support of the revolution: 'An accursed period of Aesopian language, literary servility, slavish speech, and ideological serfdom! The proletariat has put an end to this infamy which stifled everything living and fresh in Russia' (Lenin 1965: 44–49, translation modified).¹⁷

Denouncing Aesopian language as political conformism has been a well-proven device in the critique of liberalism – but neither is the liberal herself quite sure as to the honesty of its ethics and politics. In Lidia Ginzburg's notebooks, written between the mid-1920s and the late 1980s, questions concerning verbal resistance and its effectiveness occur again and again. Writing her notes on a regular basis, Ginzburg produced a chronicle of the gradually transforming Soviet public language. She recorded the inner struggles of the intellectual torn between the critical attitude to what was happening around her and the desire to adapt to the demands of, and to become a participant in, the new order. To resolve this conflict, the intellectual sought to invent a way of 'finding common subjects in a conversation with his time' (Ginzburg 2002: 89). But is it possible, Ginzburg asked, in speaking the language imposed by 'the time', also to 'preserve one's own voice' (*ibid.*), to modify the language of one's time by punctuating it with one's own commentary, and would such a commentary affect the meaning at all?

This is a question relevant not just for the Soviet intelligentsia of the Stalinist period. It also acquired significance in contemporary Western critical theory and

philosophy dealing with the political and aesthetic experiences of the twentieth century. Thus, Herbert Marcuse's one-dimensional man is the inhabitant of a world in which the total rule of political terror has given place to a society dominated by total administration: a society without opposition, a discourse in which criticism is paralysed. After the end of political terror, new systems of control lead to the closing of the universe of discourse, even if not any longer through direct violence, but through the techniques of administration (primarily censorship), through those regimes of social management that impose a false pacification on the participants of discourse. One-dimensional speakers do not believe in the 'truths' censorship demands of them, nor do they care for its demands, but still act accordingly. In the pacified existence of the one-dimensional man, Marcuse argues, normal human expressions are branded as asocial:

refusal of all toughness, togetherness, and brutality; disobedience to the tyranny of the majority; profession of fear and weakness [...], a sensitive intelligence sickened by what is being perpetrated; the commitment to the feeble and ridiculed actions of protest and refusal. [...] The human attitudes tend to become escapist attitudes, to follow Samuel Beckett's advice: 'Don't wait to be hunted to hide ...'

(Marcuse 1964: 248–249)

Beckett's formula (minus the sarcasm) captures the very gist of Aesopian strategy.

From Marcuse's point of view, an attempt to express 'refusal and protest' by using Aesopian language would yield a result exactly opposite to the intended; instead of making a statement, it would provide one with an escape from the very necessity of making a statement: 'personal withdrawal of mental and physical energy from socially required activities and attitudes' (Marcuse 1964: 243). Hence, Marcuse's warning to art, a warning that seems addressed to those who, like Losev and Brodsky, believe in the absolute subversive power of aesthetics as 'a cathartic carnival'. Being a reality of illusion and appearance, art – including here artistic forms of Aesopian dissent and resistance – always runs the risk of being reduced, or reducing itself, to a part of the 'apparatus' (ibid.: 259) – or of having to resort to the Beckettian politics of 'hiding without waiting to be hunted'.

Another aspect that also bears on the dilemma of subjectivity and its Aesopian uncertainty directly concerns the problem of language and legitimacy, or language as the means of establishing or undermining legitimacy. In the social sciences, this problem was formulated by Pierre Bourdieu (1991), for whom legitimacy (of language) is the result of the double process of production and reproduction. As production, legitimate (official, hegemonic) language results from the specifically linguistic policy of the state. As reproduction, legitimacy resides in the recognition of the language as legitimate by the user. All subjects involved in the political economy of symbolic domination adapt to it, and thus contribute, even through subversive euphemisms, to the further legitimization of the hegemonic language.

[D]ominated subjects strive desperately to correctness, consciously or unconsciously, subject the stigmatized aspects ... of their dictum (involving various forms of euphemism) ... or in the disarray which leaves them 'speechless', tongue-tied', 'at a loss for words', as if they were suddenly dispossessed of their own language.

(Bourdieu 1991: 52)

This, Bourdieu explains, is because:

[S]ymbolic domination presupposes, on the part of those who submit to it, a form of complicity which is neither passive submission to external constraint nor a free adherence to values. The recognition of the legitimacy of the official language has nothing in common with an explicitly professed, deliberate and revocable belief, or with an intentional act of accepting a 'norm'. It is inscribed, in a practical state, in dispositions which are imperceptibly inculcated, through a long and slow process of acquisition, by the sanctions of the linguistic market, and which are therefore adjusted, without any cynical calculation or consciously experienced constraints, to the chances of material and symbolic profit which the laws of price formation characteristic of a given market objectively offer to the holders of a given linguistic capital.

(Bourdieu 1991: 50–51)

Bourdieu explains legitimacy (a political category) in the non-political terms of administrative control, as a matter of feedback ('recognition'). In so doing, he joins Marcuse in questioning art's ability (for instance, in Losev's carnivalesque catharsis) to restore subjectivity 'in appearance' after it has been eliminated in the reality of an administratively controlled society (in which, to reiterate, censorship constitutes the core of the 'apparatus'). Following Marcuse's critique of administered society, Bourdieu also places legitimacy in the domain of administrative power, and thus denies political subversion to the subject of (Aesopian) speech. This is how Bourdieu speakers, irrespective of the poetics and politics of their speech, whether conforming or resisting, all become collaborators of the regime, by subscribing to the 'language of the time'.

However, the literary uses of Aesopian language can be considered in wholly different light. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1986) discuss linguistic practices that are structurally similar to those of the Soviet intelligentsia, at least if one subsumes under Aesopian language (as Losev did in his approach) not only linguistic means in the narrow sense, but also extra- and paralinguistic expression. 'Minor literature' is a language 'a minority constructs within a major language ... a deterritorialized language, appropriated for strange and minor uses' (Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 16–17). The concept is exemplified by the minor status of the German-writing Moravian Jew Franz Kafka within the empire of German-language literature of his time. Similarly to the Russian notion of Aesopian language, vis-à-vis the grandness of the 'major' Soviet language,

minor literature [...] is a collective enunciation [...] positively charged with the role and function of collective, even revolutionary, enunciation. [It] produces an active solidarity in spite of skepticism; [...] the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility.

(Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 17)

The potential ability of minor literature to reconstitute its major counterpart (as Kafka revolutionized literature in the 'major' German literature) lies in the fact that minor literature does not attack the establishment from the externality of a different language, but speaks the *same* language as the establishment. (Compare this with Ginzburg's desire to 'preserve her own [minor] voice' while speaking with her time about [major] 'common subjects', which is to say, using a marginal, but basically the *same* language as that of the 'epoch'.)

The possible approaches to Aesopian language outlined above, as mutually antagonistic as they are, point to one common net result: the suspension of subjectivity. The subject is subject to interminable hesitation: between belief and distrust, reality and appearance, togetherness and betrayal, subversion and subscription. Already recalled so many times, Chernyshevskii's Verochka experiences something in the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari's 'solidarity in spite of skepticism' – or is it scepticism in spite of solidarity? – as she listens to Lopukhov's Aesopian discourse. Vera Pavlovna is smiling, yet her smile is full of uncertainty: 'it started appearing to her – how did it start to appear to her? – no, it cannot be true – yes, it is true! – [...]. Was it an illusion on Verochka's part or was it really so?'

Aesopian language as a gamble: naming the unnameable

...given to talking, or condemned to talk...

(Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*)

As I attempted to argue above, Aesopian language is a fundamentally ambiguous phenomenon, in the understanding of which one has to deal with multiple uncertainties. It is uncertain as a (communicative) action with uncertain political and aesthetic intentions; underlying it is an uncertain subjectivity vacillating between the opposed poles of resistance and conformity; it is uncertain whether its ambiguity achieves the double purpose of deceiving the foe while appealing, at the same time, to the solidarity of the friend; it is equally uncertain whether the friend responds to its message with a reciprocal gesture of solidarity. Given these varying doses of uncertainty, Aesopian language cannot be considered a language game; it is a language gamble, and at high stakes. In raising her toast 'to the health of those who gave us our happy life', Nadezhda Mandel'stam took a considerable risk; she was banking on there being an understanding, 'initiated' listener at the other pole of the strange communication channel she was opening.

The role of the listener/reader should be seen as absolutely critical. In the 1980s, Lidia Ginzburg was re-reading her scholarly writing from the Stalinist period, when the use of Aesopian language had been for her a necessity, as it provided her with the only way of saying something that was for her meaningful, even if between the lines of the official Soviet 'language of the time'. The re-reading left her with a gnawing feeling of shame and defeat.

Now my book about [Herzen's] *My Past and Thoughts* is the hardest for me to re-read. I wrote it during the years (the late 1940s and early 1950s) when literary scholarship (as well as literature itself) for the most part already consisted merely of exclamations of loyalty. Yet, this book contained thoughts, and therefore to me it seemed fabulously free (it had been stuck at the publisher's [waiting for publication] for six years). In the meantime, non-freedom in it was the deeply ingrained non-freedom of what went without saying and was not subject to doubt.

(Ginzburg 2002: 294)¹⁸

The 'non-freedom' mentioned by Ginzburg resulted from the circumstances of the publication process under a regime whose enunciations could not be 'subject to doubt'. But the book, she assures us, also 'contained thoughts', the kind of thoughts that needed to be smuggled through the interstices between the 'non-freedoms'. There was, even in the time of writing, a freedom of independent thinking, albeit crowded by the unending 'exclamations of loyalty' that had come to replace genuine scholarly values. To illustrate how 'thoughts' interrupted 'loyalty', Ginzburg quotes the following fragment from her book on Herzen:

The central idea of the chapter '*Venezia la bella*' is that genuine [revolutionary] content has already withered in the Italian national movement, which adapts itself to the European bourgeois order. [Herzen's] disillusionment in the Italian bourgeois-national movement leads [him] to a sceptical and, of course, mistaken opinion that at the present stage reaction is the only real force of the capitalist Western world.

(Ginzburg 2002: 294)

It would be difficult for the present-day reader to understand where exactly in this fragment is that heretical thought that made the author feel, at the time of writing, that her book was 'fabulously free'. Where are those tiny punctuation marks that open windows of fresh air in the stifling interior of Stalinism? It could be the observation about 'reaction being nowadays the only real force': such a statement would be 'of course, mistaken', because, according to the Stalinist version of history, 'the only real force of the time' would be the Soviet state, and it could never be reactionary. 'Nowadays' could also refer to Ginzburg's, not Herzen's time, and 'disillusionment' define the mood of Ginzburg's generation, not only Herzen's. Indeed, making a comment about anybody's (not only

Herzen's) disillusionment in the Stalinist 1950s, the time of 'exclamations of loyalty', could not have been easy. Besides, Herzen himself was a difficult character in the eyes of the Soviet censor. His scepticism concerning the proletarian revolution was never completely forgiven. In this cautious commentary, Ginzburg provided an alibi for Herzen by subtly introducing the reason for his scepticism, which, 'of course', is not the incompatibility between Herzen's philosophy of history and Stalin's, but merely the former's 'disillusionment'. The 'of course' in her commentary is almost openly ironic, probably the only element that might give away the presence of euphemization. With a closer look, the reader can follow how Ginzburg's critical thought creates a whole system of insincere quotations from the legitimate language ('of course') and thus achieves a total blending with the surrounding environment of legitimate language.

The 'fabulous freedom' for the 'thoughts' turns out to be almost nonexistent. Did she succeed in naming the unnameable? Has her intricate work of camouflage led to any palpable result in terms of expressing 'thoughts'? Has it awakened any critical thought in the reader in response to the author's critical thinking, so carefully concealed by means of that very language that is subject to criticism? No, Ginzburg answers as she re-reads the once 'fabulously free' passage – on the contrary. Instead of attacking the dominant language, it only led to 'necrosis' [*omertvenie tkanei*] in her own. Reflecting on her own scholarly biography and the destinies of her like-minded colleagues ('our lot'), i.e. those who chose the humiliating conditions of Aesopian language in the hope of preserving the purity of truth while operating from the inside of Stalinist literary institutions, Ginzburg continues:

Whether true or not, this [the effects of using Aesopian language] was necrosis that invaded the living flesh of the book. During the 30s, this mechanism already existed, but it operated then in an environment of healthy tissues of the letters. In the atmosphere of frenetic servility during the last Stalinist years, we thought that we had retained our purity. That was not only our impression, but also that of the publishers, who either refused to publish our lot, or published us with gnashing of teeth. But now it is so hard to re-read. The sight of intellectual force wasted like this is painful.

(Ginzburg 2002: 294)

Ginzburg's generation of the intelligentsia, the linguistic gamblers of the late 1920s and early 1930s, accepted future risks when they chose to operate in the ever-increasing uncertainty of a politically imposed diglossia ([*dvuiazychie*], Ginzburg's term). This decision gave them a space for manoeuvring in the short run, but led to a necrosis of language in the end. By the late 1940s, Ginzburg declares, diglossia had disappeared to give way to the ossified monolingualism of Late Stalinism. Monolingualism manifests itself not in the disappearance of the Aesopian speaker, but in the indifference of the Aesopian reader/listener. Euphemization, as carefully crafted as it was in the preparation of that comment on Herzen, was wasted on the reader, who lost the skills of, or interest in,

Aesopian interpretation. With the disappearance of ‘initiated’ and solitary readers, a language invented for critique closes onto itself, and the critical and undermining message once contained in the carefully manufactured circumlocution is no longer evident even to its author.

Re-reading such passages, the writer feels ashamed. At the time of writing, engrossed in the contemplation of her own ingenuity in producing acceptable expression for unacceptable realities, she did not realize that she was stepping into a trap. It is not the language of resistance, in Ginzburg’s experience, that undermines and questions the language of the majority, but, on the contrary, the dominant language that consumes its resistant opponent and digests its resistant meanings. When the euphemism mimics the dominant language, it seeks to penetrate unnoticed into the hegemonic ‘apparatus’. Yet, in doing this, it also opens up an access for the ‘apparatus’ inside the language of critique. This is how legitimate language re-expropriates its own terms from the Aesopian writer, cleanses them from Aesopian irony, and makes itself at home in the Aesopian word, reclaiming its dominance inside the euphemism:

At that time, it seemed to us, that there was just one language left, in which everything speaks. That it is our only given language and that there is no other besides. We therefore had an acute sense of every deviation from its laws, we experienced emotionally the courage and the joy of our own language that we preserved without noticing how the common language infiltrated and populated our own discourse.

(Ginzburg 2002: 294)

This happens when Aesopian language loses the listener, the reader, the one who knows how to practise its ironic hermeneutics and who believes in its mythology (as the young Vera Pavlovna believes that it is only to her, and no one but her, that Lopukhov is speaking the word of truth through the verbal smoke screen). The task of rescuing Aesopian language from drowning in its own uncertainties remains with the reader/listener: as uncertain as she is about the actual meaning, intention, and even the reality itself of the carefully coded message, the reader/listener is still there to receive it, to enjoy its uncertain catharsis, to respond to it with a ‘solidarity in spite of skepticism’, or – at least – to give it an almost suppressed smile.

Notes

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- 1 Слово 'писать' приобрело добавочный смысл. Старый ученый [...] сказал мне про группу преуспевающих кандидатов: 'Все они пишут'. [...] Работая с Усачевой в Ташкенте в университете, мы не искали стукачей, потому что 'писали' все. [...] И мы упражнялись в эзоповом языке. В присутствии аспирантов мы поднимали первый тост за тех, кто дал нам такую счастливую жизнь, и посвященные, и аспиранты вкладывали в него нужный смысл. Translation mine – I.S.
- 2 Emphasis added. – I.S.
- 3 Хороша ли его невеста? – Необыкновенно. – Есть ли приданое? – теперь нет, но получает большое наследство. – Большое? – Очень большое. – Как велико? – Очень велико. – Тысяч до ста? – Гораздо больше. – А сколько же? – Да что об этом говорить, довольно того, что очень много. – В деньгах? – Есть и в деньгах. – Может быть, и в поместьях! – Да, есть и в поместьях. – Скоро? – Скоро. – А свадьба скоро ли? – Скоро (Chernyshevskii 1967: 103).
- 4 Верочка сначала едва удерживалась от слишком заметной улыбки, но постепенно ей стало казаться, – как это ей стало казаться? – нет, это не так, нет, это так! что Лопухов, хоть отвечал Марье Алексевне, но говорит не с Марьей Алексевною, а с нею, Верочкою, что над Марьей Алексевною он подшучивает, серьезно же и правду, и только правду, говорит одной ей, Верочке (ibid.: 104).
- 5 Только из-за цензурного пугала этим сценам был придан бессвязны и якобы случайный характер, а на самом деле все они бьют в одну точку, все кричат об одном и том же. При помощи этих будто бы разрозненных сцен Слепцову удалось произвести систематический и планомерный обзор всех наиболее заметных явлений тогдашней общественной жизни и каждое из этих явлений измерить единственной мерой: полезно ли оно для трудового крестьянства. Translation mine – I.S.
- 6 Emphasis added.
- 7 [...] величайшего единения вождей революционной демократии с читательской массой шестидесятых годов. Они были настолько уверены в сочувствии и понимании тех, к кому обращались из месяца в месяц, что в случаях полной невозможности провести сквозь цензуру ту или иную свою мысль предлагали ее читателю в перевернутом виде, твердо уверенные, что читатель догадается прочитать ее наоборот.
- 8 This transformation of the 1920 and 1930s is described in detail by Lidia Ginzburg in her notebooks (Ginzburg 2002: 12–430; see analysis in Sandomirskaja 2013b: 173–265).
- 9 в эту пору во Франции абсолютная монархия, по словам Маркса, выступает в 'качестве цивилизующего центра, в качестве основоположника национального единства'. И французский классицизм XVII века, являясь в основном дворянским стилем, стилем абсолютизма, стремился в то же время к созданию общегосударственного, общенационального искусства. Центральной темой, идеей классицизма являлся культ государственных, гражданских добродетелей, которым классицизм приносил в жертву все личные стремления человека. В основе идеологии сложившегося нового государственного единства лежало требование строжайшей дисциплины, подчинения всех подданных абсолютной силе государственной власти. Отдельный человек как личность в его несходстве с другими людьми, в его частных стремлениях, желаниях, страхах признавался с этой точки зрения явлением и неценным, и даже как бы несуществующим. Единственно ценным и подлинно существующим в общественной жизни признавалось само общество, государство, не только объединяющее всех граждан, но как бы поглощающее их. Translation mine. – I.S.
- 10 The chain of parodies – 'old' history reappearing as a 'new' one – does not end here. In 1960, the literary scholar Arkadii Belinkov, a former student of the Formalists and a former Gulag prisoner, published Tynianov's biography (Belinkov 1965). Belinkov

not only returned Tynianov from his politically imposed oblivion and restored Tynianov's heritage to Russian culture. He also depicted Tynianov as an opponent of the regime and a critic of the Soviet reality (which Tynianov was not, at least not in the meaning Belinkov intended). Belinkov projected his own dissident manner of using Aesopian speech onto Tynianov when he assumed that the latter had merely used literary theory and history to camouflage his anti-Soviet attitudes (on Belinkov's own Aesopian writing manner, see Loseff 1984: 46–50). This book, however, earned Belinkov himself a reputation as a critic of the Soviet system, a pioneer in the use of Aesopian speech in dissident activities.

- 11 Losev acknowledged Chukovsky's role in the research of Aesopian language (Loseff 1984: 15–19) and analysed Chukovsky's own Aesopian speech practice as this was implemented in the parodies and subtexts of his children's poetry (ibid.: 192–202). He also emphasized Chukovsky's unique pedagogical role, as a popular author of children's tales, in preparing 'generations after generations of future Russian readers to search out [Aesopian] subtext in the works they read.' (ibid.: 198).
- 12 For Losev's biography and publications, see <http://magazines.russ.ru/authors/l/losev/> (accessed 30 March 2014).
- 13 Useful information and critical reflection on Soviet children's literature as an arena of the grown-ups' language games can be found in Kukulin *et al.* (2008).
- 14 More on Aesopian uses of translation in the USSR, see Witt (2003, 2001).
- 15 Slavoj Žižek could have objected to this by reminding us that enjoyment is also dictated by the super-ego. Coming from a dissident environment in Socialist Yugoslavia, comparable to Losev's cultural underground milieu in Brezhnev's Leningrad, Žižek is critical towards the idea of direct subversive potential in pure aesthetics (Žižek 2002: 7–60).
- 16 Мне могут возразить здесь; а иносказательный рабий язык! а умение говорить между строками? – Да, отвечу я, действительно, обе эти характерные особенности выработались во время пребывания литературы в плену и обе несомненно свидетельствуют о ее попытках прорваться сквозь неприятельскую цепь. Но ведь как ни говори, а рабий язык все-таки рабий язык, и ничего больше. Улица никогда между строк читать не умела, и по отношению к ней рабий язык не имел и не мог иметь воспитательного значения. Так что если тут и была победа, то очень и очень небольшая. Translation mine. – I.S.
- 17 Проклятая пора эзоповских речей, литературного холопства, рабьего языка, идейного крепостничества! пролетариат положил конец этой гнусности, от которой задыхалось, все живое и свежее на Руси (Lenin 1960: 100).
- 18 Here and further translation from Ginzburg is mine – I.S.

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Part II

Negotiating codes of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe

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4 From subject of action to object of description

The classes in the Romanian official discourse during communism

Călin Morar-Vulcu

Introduction

In the Soviet Union and in Soviet-type regimes the reference to social class was an essential part of the legitimating practices. This chapter follows the direction of research on class identity in the context of the Soviet Union (Fitzpatrick 1990, 1993; Kenney 1994; Siegelbaum and Suny 1994; Smith 1997; Neumann 2006; Siegelbaum 2006) and on the construction of identity from a discourse-analytic perspective (Stamou 2001; Benwell and Stokoe 2006; Alameda-Hernández 2008; Wodak *et al.* 2009; Bednarek and Martin 2010). I attempt, first, to show how the social classes were represented in the official discourse in communist Romania, and second, whether the means of representation changed between Incipient and Late Socialism (and, if yes, how). My third objective is, by tapping my analysis into the debates in the field of communication practices in communist regimes, to provide arguments for taking seriously the content of the socialist texts.

There is a rich literature on official language in communist systems. One theory, which took shape during the last decades of the Cold War and could be subsumed under the label of *langue de bois*, holds several radical theses. The first proposition is that the communist language was completely subjected to those in power, who tried and succeeded in manipulating the thoughts of the masses through a whole range of means. Among those were the use of military imagery, inciteful formulas, slogans, incantations, dogmatic deduction, unchallengeable assertions, the use of 'isms', ironic quoting, pejorative affixes and other instruments (Young 1992). The second thesis is that *langue de bois* distorted the reality and manipulated the meanings of the words. The third (and rather contradictory) one is that, due to its grammatical and syntactic features, which include lexical impoverishment, nominalization, decreased use of verbs, cumbersome syntax and absence of deictics, this language variety failed as an instrument of communication (Thom 1989; with respect to Romania, see Slama-Cazacu 2000; Teodorescu 2000; Irimiaș 2003; for a critique of this position, see Sériot 1985, 1986a, 1986b, 1986c, 1989).

Along an objectivist view of semantics, this vision posits that thought is determined by language, which, in turn, is used as an instrument by the rulers.

Thus, the causality is entirely intentional: the prime movers are the individuals in power, the final victims are their helpless subjects and the tool is the language. Alexei Yurchak (2006: 6) refuted this dichotomic model and viewed the form of the Late Soviet official discourse as the consequence of an unforeseen event, the death of Stalin, which brought, paradoxically, insecurity for the producers of the discourse, who missed an authority showing them the line to take. In the unpredictable political environment, they took refuge in a strategy based on erasing all auctorial markers and, thus, responsibility. In this way, the discourse became repetitive, citational, circular and lost its constative dimension, remaining only as a performative gesture. Although clearly differing in many respects, Yurchak's theory and the *langue de bois* theory seem to share two causally related points. First, the language loses the relation to something outside it, thus losing its constative dimension. Implicit in this common position is the idea of normativity: that there is a normal way in relation to which the official discourse is deviant. Second, the authoritative discourse can be described as blocked communication: it contained a string of grammatically and syntactically well-formed texts, which were in fact reduced to verbal or written support for illocutionary acts.

An alternative view could be grounded in systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and related disciplines (such as social semiotics), which view language as meaning-making potential. The process of making meaning is based on a system of choices between alternative realizations, at three interrelated levels: ideational (what the text is about, how the reality is represented), interpersonal (what is the author's attitude towards the reader or towards her text) and textual (how is the text organized). What type of lexico-grammatical resource is selected by the speaker for representing a particular portion of reality is significant in the context of what is not selected. This view is different from the ideas of normative focus, distortion or inadequacy, of language to reality; furthermore, it takes the content of the texts seriously and considers the text to be multidimensional, avoiding the reduction of one dimension to the others.

Here, I focus on two specific portions of the ideational meaning-making system, namely how social actors (in this instance, classes) are represented¹ as *doing* things (or material processes, in the terms of Michael Halliday (see Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 170–171)), and how they are portrayed as *being* or *having* something (that is, relational processes, in the same terminology).

The *material* processes unfold in time and are governed by the system of transitivity (or transactivity) (Eggins 2004: 206), which organizes the represented processes, participants and circumstances according to the basic schema *who* (the participant/agent) does *what* (action/process) to *whom* (patient/participant/goal). Basically, the relevant distinction here is between activated and passivated actors: the former play more the role of agent, the latter are preponderantly patient. A further distinction has to be made between the transactive and non-transactive actions (Hodge and Kress 1993: 38–43). The former extend upon some other actor – the patient, the goal – while the latter do not. The non-transactive actions can also be active (the peasantry 'takes steps' on the path to

socialism) or passive (the socialist nation ‘flourishes’), according to the amount of control the agent has over the action. A further distinction is that between instrumental and interactive actions: the first typically take non-human patients, while the second take human (or human-like) patients. As van Leeuwen says, when used with human patients, the instrumental actions treat them as things – this is frequently the case with the administrative discourse (van Leeuwen 2008: 60).

The *relational* processes, unlike the material ones, do not encode action meaning, but meanings about states of being (Eggs 2004: 237). They are expressed by verbs such as *to be* or *to have* (or equivalents such as *to mean*, *to represent* and others). In Halliday’s terms, relational processes are unfolding inertly, without an input of energy and without distinct phases of unfolding (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 211–212), with a beginning and an end. They attribute to the actor a quality (*a* is *x*’s attribute), an identity (*x* is *a*) or a possession (*x* has *a*).

The material and relational processes are crucial for representing social action. In turn, representing action is central to expressing ideology (Fairclough and Wodak 1997), since it encourages or naturalizes certain ways of perceiving reality. As Günther Kress puts it, the way an action is represented (as transactive or non-transactive) is not a matter of truth or reality, but rather concerns ‘the way in which that particular action is integrated into the ideological system of the speaker, and the manner in which such an action is therefore articulated in a specific discourse’ (Kress 1990: 84). Returning to the concept of *choice*, in the standard (congruent) distribution of roles in the system of transactivity, actions are realized by verbs and participant roles by nominal groups (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 177). The alterations of this basic schema constitute what Halliday calls grammatical metaphor (ibid.: 592), and are ideologically significant, because they foreground, background or eliminate certain aspects of the represented practice – for instance, representing action by a nominal group (nominalization) results in eliminating agents. At the same time, transactivity is linked to projecting power and influence over the world: agents of material action are represented as more powerful in the implicit hierarchy of power than agents of non-transactive actions or than patients.

The core source of the analysis to follow consists of three corpora of texts composed of articles from the official newspaper of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP), *Scînteia* (*The Spark*), one from 1948–1953 (98 texts), another from 1961–1965 (90 texts) and the third from 1985–1989 (80 texts). The primary criterion of selection was their field: they are what could be described as political texts, that is, they deal with issues such as institutions, practices, policies, society, social groups, classes and so on. A wide range of other official texts is also used: articles written by the Party leaders – Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceaușescu – speeches at the official Party meetings and published proceedings of Party conferences and congresses between 1960 and 1989.

The analysis borrows concepts from linguistics and social semiotics, but it is not a linguistic analysis per se. My focus is on representing social actors and not

on grammatical categories, which is why I use not the grammatical categories of transitivity or object, but the 'sociological', such as agency. The main part of the analysis is qualitative, in the sense that I am interested in what type of actions/processes classes are involved from a twofold perspective: (1) what they do or in which relational processes they are involved and (2) which transactive roles they have (agent or patient). The study has a quantitative side, in the sense that it includes information concerning different types of actions (expressed as percentages) in the three corpora. Such statistical information has to be regarded in the context of this chapter not as ultimate proof of what is going on in the discourse, but only as a way of making relevant distinctions more visible.

The chapter is organized as follows: first, I analyse the transformations occurring at the level of material actions and relational processes between Stalinist and Late Socialist era texts, then I discuss two 'typical' texts about classes produced in two different moments (1950 and 1977) in order to see how the discourse concerning classes changes at the level of genre and register. Before concluding, I discuss the findings in connection to the evolving strategies of legitimization of the Romanian Communist Party in Late Socialist Romania.

Analysis

Activation: material processes

If we use the activation and passivization as classifying criteria for the actors of the corpora, we may obtain a classification within the range from typically activated to typically passivized actors. In the Stalinist corpus, typically activated actors are situated at the two ends of the legitimacy spectrum: they are either highly licit, as *the Party*, or highly illicit, as *the bourgeoisie* or *exploiting classes*. The Party acts interactively ('guides', 'helps', 'educates', 'crushes') and instrumentally ('leads', 'organizes', 'annihilates') with both the licit ('the working class', 'the peasantry', 'the people') and illicit actors ('the exploiting classes') as patients. On the other hand, the Party is the least passivized actor (4 per cent of the total). The exploiting classes, on the other hand, perform radical interactive actions ('cultivate nationalism/racism', 'hate', 'poison' and 'kill') upon the people, the working class or upon women, within a physical or economic paradigm – exploit or keep under the yoke. At the same time, the illicit actors are passivized in relation to the Party, the state and the working class in instrumental or interactive actions ('the exploiting classes are toppled', 'done away with' or 'crushed').

Typically passivized actors are children, women, national minorities/nationalities and youth. Their action pattern is, explicably, the inverse of the pattern of the above-mentioned actors, since they are the object of action of either licit or illicit actors. Children and youth are the object of education and rearing, women are guided, educated, qualified and helped. They are also the object of interactive action situated in the past by illicit actors: they are kept in darkness, isolated, killed and oppressed.

Typically non-transactive actors are the people, the intellectuals and the socialist nation. The latter is represented almost exclusively through non-transactives: it arises, is reborn, flourishes and develops – all these actions seem to occur by themselves, without any input from the actor.

In this general framework, *the working class* can be characterized as a low-level activated actor (see Table 4.1). In around 50 per cent of material actions in which it is involved, it is the agent of transactive actions (in the case of powerful actors such as the Party or the bourgeoisie the figure is over 70 per cent). The predominant action the working class performs is *leading* other social actors or society. Usually, it has a ‘relay’ role (the Party is ‘leading the working class’, which, in turn, is ‘leading’ actors such as ‘the working people’, ‘peasantry’ and ‘the intellectuals’). It performs instrumental actions upon the exploiting classes (‘the working class’ ‘topples’ or ‘crushes’ them) and abstract entities (‘conquers power’, ‘takes the means of production from the hands of exploiters’). The working class is patient in relation to two main participants: the Party itself (it is ‘led’ by it) and the class enemy (it is ‘subjugated’, ‘exploited’ or ‘enchained’ by it). Finally, the working class performs active non-transactive actions connected to the central ethos of building socialism (‘fighting’, ‘taking steps’, ‘making efforts’).

The peasantry is a typically passive actor during Stalinism. Although it performs transactive actions, these either have inanimate entities as patients (‘the peasantry’ ‘supports the democratic popular regime’, ‘takes the power into its hands’) or are reflexive (‘the peasantry’ ‘organizes itself’ or ‘is increasing its homogeneity’). The peasantry is patient both in relation to the licit and illicit actors (‘the Party’, ‘the working class’, ‘the kulaks’, ‘the landowners’). In general, the actions performed are interactive: is/was ‘robbed’, ‘oppressed’, ‘exploited’, ‘influenced’, ‘dispossessed’. The Party and state act interactively and instrumentally both in typical material and mental actions (‘calls upon’, ‘persuades’, ‘educates’, ‘supports’, ‘liberates’, ‘attracts’, ‘lifts’, ‘mobilizes’, ‘moves the peasantry’) or in what van Leeuwen (2008: 33–34) terms beneficialization: they ‘save’, ‘help’ and ‘protect’ the peasantry. The non-transactive actions the peasantry performs are connected to the building of socialism, but this agent is construed as secondary, since it is merely participating or contributing to an action initiated by others.

The intellectuals perform only non-transactive actions in the Stalinist corpus. They act in two ways: one within the framework of the PATH metaphor (‘take steps’, ‘follow’) and the other as auxiliary, similarly to the peasantry (‘contribute to’ and ‘participate in building socialism’). They are rarely patient, but the passivization pattern is significant, since the main agent acting upon them is the Party (it ‘forges’ and ‘unifies’ ‘the intellectuals’).

For the majority of actions in which classes are involved in the Stalinist corpus, the distribution of the agent – action – patient semantic roles follows, in general, the distribution of the subject (nominal group) – verb – object (nominal group) grammatical functions, and thus the action is represented dynamically. In the case of each actor, one can establish with some certainty a sphere of action

Table 4.1 Main types of material actions in the representation of the classes in the three corpora (percentages)

	Stalinism (1948–1953)			Post-Stalinism (1961–1965)			Late Socialism (1985–1989)		
	Working class	Peasantry	Intellectuals	Working class	Peasantry	Intellectuals	Working class	Peasantry	Intellectuals
Non-transactives	33	22.6	48.6	57.7	69.4	82.7	77.7	86.7	78.9
Activation	50.75	6.2	0	29.1	7.4	2.8	13.7	8.1	13.2
Passivization	16.25	71.2	51.3	13.1	23.1	14.4	8.5	5.1	7.9

Note

Due to rounding, some columns do not total to 100%.

which is functionally integrated into the grand narrative of Incipient Socialism (with slight differences: 'the working class' 'fights the enemy', 'leads the other classes', 'the peasantry' 'is helped', 'the intellectuals' 'participate').

In post-Stalinism and Late Socialism, the Romanian political lexis went through a change, discarding some terms and stabilizing the meanings of others, by abandoning the acceptations most associated with Stalinism (Trifon 1989, 1990). Only a few, more standardized categories designating enemies remained ('spies', 'traitors', 'class enemies'). The rest disappeared, along with the most extreme actions that these actors were represented as performing or undergoing – in general, these are violent, destructive and coercive actions. In this context, two interrelated processes may be observed as reflected in the data presented in Table 4.1: a decrease in activation and passivization and an increase in non-transactivity.

In the post-Stalinist and Late Socialist eras, the transactive actions occurred in two separate temporal realms: present and past. When situated in the present, they underwent a process of non-transactivization, in the sense that their agents acted either upon things or upon themselves, so the transactive action became increasingly reflexive: for instance, the working class was seen as 'increasing its ranks' and 'fortifying its leading role' in society. What is lost here is the interactive action, subsumed under the SOCIAL GROUP AS INDIVIDUAL metaphor. There was also an increase in the occurrence of processes which, instead of a goal/patient, had what Halliday calls range (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 192–295) – for instance, the action of fulfilling the role or realizing the policy of the Party. Even if formally transactive, they may be better described as non-transactive, since the patient and the action are not conceptually independent and the 'done-to' is a part of the process itself.

A significant difference between class representation is that in Late Socialism the intellectuals were involved as an agent in a relatively high number of transactive (interactive) actions (for example, in educating) which put the society or its members into the role of patients. At the same time, passivization decreased for all classes, most notably in the case of the peasantry.

The majority of congruently expressed transactive actions (both active and passive) were situated in an increasingly distant past, within the framework of a historical account of class struggle, exploitation and conquering power, in which the classic transactive schema of Stalinism still functioned ('the working class' and 'the peasantry' as agent and, respectively, patient). This type of historical account was also present in Stalinist texts, but was complemented by a large quantity of transactive material actions situated in the present, within a narrative of empowering classes as political agents ('the working class' had been 'oppressed by the bourgeoisie', then it 'toppled' it). The 'historicization' taking place in post-Stalinism placed the agency of the classes into the past, as a ritual object, thus divesting it of real significance in the present.

In post-Stalinism and Late Socialism the non-transactive actions were similar to those encountered in the Stalinist corpus: the working class fights or develops, the peasantry works, the intellectuals participate in the building of socialism.

The difference is that these actions increased sharply in the case of each actor. Other changes concern the action of participating in building socialism: in Stalinism, this had been associated mostly with the intellectuals, but starting from the 1970s, all classes were seen as performing this action, often within a virtual frame of reference suggested by deontic modality.

Three other significant evolutions took place in post-Stalinist texts in relation to non-transactives. First, the agents of non-transactive actions were frequently associated (van Leeuwen 2008: 38–40), for example, ‘the working class, the peasantry, the intellectuals, all working people redouble their efforts in order to achieve new victories’ (*Scînteia* 1965: 1), which weakens the distinction between them. Second, the actions were seen as not specific, having a rather general scope, for example, ‘the classes acted decisively, carrying out the policy of the state’ (Romanian Communist Party 1977: 50). Third, from the beginning of the 1970s on, an increase in passive non-transactives (expressing natural processes of growing and developing) could be noticed.

One particular aspect of transactivity needs to be mentioned in relation to Late Socialism, namely, the growing use of nominalization. Nominalization is extensively discussed in the literature on state-socialist discourse (Sériot 1985, 1986c; Thom 1989). I am concerned here only with its effects on the transactivity pattern of the analysed actors. Functionally, nominalization serves to encode more meaning per word, and thus the sentence gains in lexical density (Halliday 1985: 61–64), as the verb that expresses congruently the action is transformed into a noun and can be used as an (abstract) agent in its own right – compare ‘the working class topples the bourgeoisie’ with ‘the toppling of the bourgeoisie meant eliminating a hurdle in the way of building socialism’. One effect of nominalization (when this is the transformation of a verb into noun – *nomina actionis*) is the elimination of normal temporality and the appearance of a complex temporality: each ‘packing’ becomes a fact already established at a previous, unstated point in time (Yurchak 2006: 68–70). Another effect is that the individual agency disappears from the representation of action, since through nominalization the action is removed from the agent.

The Late Socialist discourse seems to be a place where ‘abnormal’ agency develops. Analysing speeches by Nicolae Ceaușescu, Cornelia Ilie notes a general demotion of agency, which led to a lack of definiteness and specificity as well as to the backgrounding or suppression of cause and effect relations, as inanimate objects and processes became the major focus (Ilie 1998: 65–73).

These transformations in agency and temporality affected the congruent representation of action and, implicitly, the representation of classes as agents, in particular the working class and the peasantry, since agency was so important in their earlier representations (albeit at the opposite ends of the transactivity spectrum, as agent, and respectively, patient). The shift in transactivity affected the intellectuals, but in a less noticeable way, since in the Stalinist period they had already been described as a mainly non-transactive actor.

A comparative analysis of two ‘typical’ texts (from 1950 and 1977, respectively) demonstrated in Table 4.2 suggests that the Stalinist texts dealing with

Table 4.2 Dimensions of activation in the two 'typical' texts (occurrences per 100 words)

	1950 text	1977 text
Nominalizations (<i>nomina actionis</i>)	1.65	4.64
Congruent actions represented	6.2	3.08
Concrete agents represented	3.55	0.82

classes and class relations were dominated by activated actors, the actions were represented more congruently than in the 1977 text and the use of nominalization was low, while in the Late Socialist texts the situation is reversed – that is, objectivated actions (van Leeuwen 2008: 63–65) played the role of agent.

To summarize, from Stalinism to Late Socialism, the classes underwent a three-part process of deactivation which includes: a decrease in transactive actions, an increase in non-transactive actions and the historicization of agency, which translates into a decreasing impact on the part of the actors upon the world represented in discourse.

Descriptivization: relational processes

In this section I will focus (1) on the difference between the use of relational processes in representing the classes from Stalinism to Late Socialism and (2) on the changing proportion between the relational and material processes in representing classes during this period.

During Stalinism, the working class had a relatively unspecified identity: it was not an object of definition through identifying processes (*a is b*), but just a carrier of various attributes such as being the most advanced, proud and capable. The peasantry and intellectuals, in turn, underwent a thorough process of definition, which cast doubts on their status as unitary actors. The peasantry was considered as being composed of various groups – poor, middle or working peasantry – each having their own consciousness, while the intellectuals were seen as a group going through a twofold process of transformation: on the one hand, they eliminated old members rooted in the exploiting classes and on the other, admitted new members arriving from the working class and peasantry. Unlike the working class, both were defined through genericization (van Leeuwen 2008: 35–36), that is, by establishing a set of defining features (psychological, social and economic) attached to a prototypical individual member of the class (the peasant or the intellectual).

Differently, in Late Socialism the internal divisions of the peasantry and intellectuals disappeared as they were defined as unitary actors. The genericization was not used anymore. An interesting evolution affected the working class: in a manner reminiscent of the definitional strategies through which the peasantry had been integrated into the Stalinist political community (through attributive relational processes – 'the working peasantry'), the working class was described as becoming an 'intellectual working class'.

A frequent way of defining classes during the entire state-socialist period was to refer to their position or role in the framework of society, typically, through possessive or identifying relational processes. In this case, the internal structure or the features of the actor were not highlighted, and its identity was defined by the larger structure it was deemed to be a part of. The working class was defined in the Stalinist texts as the leading political force, the leading class or the most powerful force in society, while the peasantry was defined in connection to the working class as its main ally in the villages. The intellectuals, on the other hand, were rarely characterized in the Stalinist corpus in terms of a functional role in relation to the other two classes, but more frequently in terms of their position in relation to other actors (for example, they are 'tied to the people'). This way of defining a class in relation to the other was a feature of Stalinism and undergirded the theory of alliance between non-antagonistic classes, which excluded the intellectuals. The presentation of alliance between classes introduced a dimension of agency into the description of actors – they were seen to have allied themselves consciously in pursuing a concrete goal.

In Late Socialism the role definition displayed a few, but significant differences. The working class was defined as the most advanced class, the basic force of the society and the leading class in the state, but its 'leader identity' was weakened by the multitude of the actors being ascribed a leading role.² In the case of the peasantry, in parallel with the disappearance of the attributive determinants ('poor' being the most frequent one), its status of an ally of the working class was backgrounded. Conversely, the intellectuals were foregrounded and presented as fulfilling concrete roles and functions: 'creating', 'using and disseminating spiritual goods', 'participating in the creation of material goods' and 'socializing the members of society' (Romanian Communist Party 1977: 22–23, 1989: 41–42).

At the same time, in Late Socialism the description of the working class and peasantry in terms of their roles shifted towards the economy: these classes were rather the producers of material goods than units with their own clear identity and agency. In 1974, in his report given at the eleventh RCP Congress, Nicolae Ceaușescu did not mention the working class and peasantry, but instead talked about the 'workforce' in the industry and, respectively, agriculture (Romanian Communist Party 1975: 62). In contrast to that, Ceaușescu characterized the intellectuals as having an increased role in the social, economic and political life of the country, seeing them therefore within a more general framework, which is not limited to the economy.

The reference to a certain role played by the social actors invites conceiving the existing social order as 'structural' and immutable. But the order was seen differently in Stalinism and post-Stalinism: Stalinism was a 'revolutionary order', consisting of actors having clear boundaries and being oriented towards political goals, while Late Socialism was a 'normalized' order, which legitimized itself by referring to the 'neutral' and pre-political goals (March 2003: 308–309)³ of economic efficiency and growth, of raising the standard of living and the benefits brought by the scientific-technical revolution. The two political

orders prescribed different courses of action on behalf of social actors: action (as agent or patient) for the first and smooth functioning for the second.

Relational processes were used also in the analysis of the classes' internal structure. The numerical expression of the attributes of the classes is usual in the entire socialist period, but from the 1970s onwards the focus was placed upon the stratification of groups according to parameters such as income, education, sex, age, standard of living and lifestyle, all borrowed from the sociological literature of the period, which was oriented not towards describing classes as interacting actors, but as self-contained objects whose internal structure is open to scientific investigation and prediction. This analytical look existed in Stalinism as well, but then it was linked to the classificatory practice of distinguishing sub-class actors with different degrees of legitimacy and agency (such as identifying 'poor', 'middle' and 'rich' as 'parts' of the peasantry). In post-Stalinism, this position was connected to the statements that large-scale, inevitable processes are supposedly taking place in Romania, such as the disappearance of class differences and the homogenization of society (Cazacu 1972, 1988; Trăistaru and Trăistaru 1979; Drăgan *et al.* 1983; Anastasiu 1988). This analytical look rendered all class actors passive: they were not politically differentiable agents anymore, but collections of strata whose only property was that they could 'fluctuate' – that is, be involved in a self-propelled, non-transactive process.

Starting from the 1970s, when another intermediary stage on the way to communism – the so-called 'multilaterally developed socialist society' – was introduced, the reference to class became standardized and was based overwhelmingly on relational processes. The society was seen as undergoing processes such as the formation of a new culture, the changing of the relationship between village and town, the homogenization and disappearance of class differences. In this context, the classes were reappraised too. The working class was considered to be 'the exponent of the whole society', 'a guarantor of building socialism and communism', and 'a heroic class espousing new ethics' (Romanian Communist Party 1989: 40). The peasantry was represented as a new class, simultaneously an owner and a producer, which had an important place in the production of goods and, generally, in the economic development of the country, despite the fact that its ranks would inevitably shrink (*ibid.*: 41). The intellectuals were positively appraised and linked with the future, as their social and economic importance increased (*ibid.*: 42). The standardization of these definitions was very high, instantiating what Yurchak calls 'block writing' (Yurchak 2006: 49).

The real dimension of these evolutions may be revealed by comparing the relative weight the material and relational processes have in the representation of class actors in Stalinism and Late Socialism, respectively. Comparing the results of analysis of the Stalinist and Late Socialist corpora, it can be seen that the relational processes increase sharply and, conversely, the material processes decrease. Interpreting the figures in Table 4.3 in the context of the deactivation and predominance of non-transactive actions already noted in the case of material processes, we can notice a shift from representing classes as agents towards describing them as static objects. This 'arrested state' can be connected

Table 4.3 Comparison between the relative proportions of material and relational processes, Stalinism and Late Socialism (expressed as percentages)⁴

Class actor/period	Stalinist corpus		Late Socialist corpus	
	Material	Relational	Material	Relational
Working class	83.9	12	50.9	44
Peasantry	86.2	8.58	31	59
Intellectuals	76	14.3	55	39.3

with the restructuring of temporality, which was a recurring feature in communist regimes. The stagnation that characterized the communist regimes towards their end was not only economic and social, but discursive too: countless stages were inserted between the present and the ultimate goal of attaining communism (Casier 1999). This postponement meant also that the goal, the object or the result of every action was situated in an ever more uncertain and distant future. A consequence of this situation in terms of the representation of action is the proliferation of non-transactivity.

The Stalinist and Late Socialist discourses: a comparison

The study of corpora has an obvious down-side: to a certain extent, it de-contextualizes the meaning-making process. To compensate for this shortcoming, this section will focus upon the two typical texts already used above.

The 1950 text (*Scântea* 1950) was produced at a crucial political juncture – the campaign for collectivization that had begun in Romania in 1949 – and aimed at rallying the peasantry around the goals of the regime. Rhetorically, the text presents an argumentative succession of claim–evidence moves in addition to the alternation between past and present supported by contrastive relations between sentences. The social events represented are organized along an evaluative axis: the gloomy realities of the past (such as ‘pain’, ‘exploitation’, ‘oppression’) *versus* the bright realities of the present and future. The text ends with an exhortation addressed to the peasantry, urging it to act in two directions: economic (‘to achieve better yields per hectare’ and ‘to observe planting specifications’) and political (‘to obey and fulfil decisions which are not open to discussions’, such as ‘to establish collective farms’, ‘to fight ceaselessly the enemy’, that is, ‘the kulaks’, and ‘to limit its chances’ both ‘to rob’ and ‘to oppose the building of socialism’).

The past–present alternation is paralleled by another one: between the general and the particular. The general claims about supra-individual actors are individualized by references to specific names, places and time periods. The text is deictically rich, that is, has many temporal and spatial references, and is characterized by a high density of actions and a low use of grammatical metaphors (see Table 4.2). The highly licit and illicit actors act as agents (‘the party’, ‘the working class’, and ‘the kulaks’), while the peasantry acts either as patient of material

actions or as agent in modalized sentences (it *has* to do this and that). Relational processes concern the enemy (here, 'the kulaks'), who is described in an almost scientific manner, in order to raise the awareness among the peasants and enable them to recognize and to fight it.

The 1977 text (Romanian Communist Party 1977: 21–23) contains few subordinate clauses, reading as a succession of assertions, not as an argumentation or demonstration. The actions are agentless, most of them are nominalizations of an action verb. The following is a typical example of how this text construed classes:

In the process of edifying the multilaterally developed socialist society, on the basis of the accelerated development of the technical-material basis of the society, and of the continuous growing of the socialist ownership, and of the improvement of the relations of production, there will be an accentuation of the process of rapprochement between classes and social categories.

(Romanian Communist Party 1977: 23)

In 1977 text, the classes are not represented within the framework of the SOCIAL GROUP AS INDIVIDUAL metaphor, but as inert objects of large self-propelled processes (such as 'development', 'improvement' and 'rapprochement' in the example above). They are not required to do anything concrete other than to go with the flow of impersonal action. They are involved in very few material actions, most of them non-transactive and passive and situated in the future (for example 'the peasantry will shrink', 'the intellectuals will continue to grow'). The description is dominant: there are twice as many relational processes as material ones. The predominance of relational processes and nominalizations, and the absence of deictics make these texts resemble a scientific report in which language is supposed to reflect objective reality (Eggs 2004: 91).

These two texts are typical in the sense that they were the predominant paradigm in the representation of classes as social actors in the respective periods. The 1950 text had no place in the discourse of the 1980s, and, along with it, other Stalinist-era genres disappeared in Late Socialism. One of such disappearing genres was 'letters from the working people', which contained worker and peasant stories of personal transformation from ignorance to full political consciousness, linked to the society's general evolution. In these texts, the authors thanked the Party for guiding them and vowed to follow its path. The authors' names were mentioned and, more importantly, they appeared both as *dramatis personae* and as narrators and commentators, which made them, in Stephen Kotkin's words, public 'speakers of Bolshevik' (1997: 198–237). The distance between the abstract concepts of class and the day-to-day reality was thus bridged through this act of members of the class assuming the official categories and prescribed modes of speaking and inserting them in a specific life-story narrative.

To represent the world in a certain manner means not only to assert something, but also to position oneself with respect to the reader. Stalinist texts embraced a multitude of genres that contained both oral and written narratives of

class. For instance, the 1950 text was executed in the genre of the interaction between the Party and individual peasants and it was therefore meant to be both read *and* spoken (and therefore readily usable by agitators). The texts about classes and class relations could be found in numerous places, locally and centrally, and at Party meetings and in the media. The Stalinist texts were interactive in the sense that they required concrete things from the audience, construing this audience as capable of receiving and reproducing the class-related message (the 'speaking Bolshevik' subjects).

In Late Socialism, the class issues were dealt with only through a restricted range of registers: the 1977 text acquires an 'expert to public' tenor and is emphatically a written genre (its lexico-grammatical features make it rather unsuitable for spoken interaction). Class was discussed only in official Party meetings and only by individuals in the highest offices: at the Ninth Party Congress in 1965, out of 62 speakers, only two tackled the topic of class specifically, one of them being Ceaușescu. The pattern remained the same at the next Party congresses or conferences (one to three speakers mentioned classes, and only in passing; see Romanian Communist Party 1969, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1985, 1989). Correspondingly, the generic standardization in Late Socialism correlates with a static, deactivating view of social reality, conveyed by the extended use of non-transactivity and relational processes. Moreover, the Late Socialist texts disengaged social actors (both individuals and classes) as potential addressees and dissolved them in a homogenous public of 'readers'.

The difference between the language of the Stalinist and Late Socialist texts can be explained further by mapping them respectively onto the two contrasting periods: the beginning and the end phases of a literacy process, and onto the difference between the spoken and written language. It has been noticed that the process by which an individual or a society evolves can be described in terms of a transition from oral to written language (Halliday 1985). Similarly, an evolution is discernible between the periods of Stalinism and Late Socialism, from the language that has more features of the spoken mode (such as the human actors or verbs realizing actions), to the language more characterized by the features of the written mode (such as containing no pivotal actors; and actions as well as the logical relations represented by nouns).

Additionally, the official language development can be aligned with the transition from agitation to propaganda, or the 'professionalization' of propaganda. Although this distinction introduced by Plekhanov and then Lenin has been criticized (Kenez 1985), it probably needs to be revisited. In the 1950s the so-called agitators were people taken from their workplace and summarily trained to give mobilizing speeches to a semi-literate, ad hoc assembled audience. The speeches were based, in general, on articles in the central press, written with an aim of addressing a non-educated audience and which were therefore close to the oral form of their delivery. Later, the propagandists took over the task of political informing and educating. They were, in general, better trained and more politically literate than the agitators and also operated

more within the written language mode. At the same time, the perception of the audience changed: whereas in the 1950s it was considered politically semi-literate, later on it was seen as knowledgeable and able to operate with abstract concepts.⁵ Thus, the written form increasingly gained currency and the propagandists were no longer instructed to adapt their output to the spoken-dominant variant.

The classes and the changing source of legitimization

Besides being affected by the general process of hypernormalization, the representation of the classes in Late Socialism can be regarded as the result of a series of choices made in connection with the concrete events and social processes taking place. Among these, I would like to dwell on the Romanian regime's practices of legitimization and the workers' protests in the 1970s and 1980s.

Late Socialist Romania demonstrated a dual transformation in the regime's legitimizing strategies: the emphasis was now placed on both the discourse of the nation (Kideckel 2002: 118–119) and the discourse of expert management. In the 1970s and 1980s, the RCP stepped up the inclusion policies which aimed to enlarge the political community and further the goals of the regime by providing avenues for (pseudo)participation, following what Michael Shafir (1985: 55) termed 'modernization and containment' in various organizations (Nelson 1980, 1988: 20–22). Although ritual lip-service to class was occasionally paid, the political community was no longer defined as being primarily based upon the hierarchy of classes or the alliance between classes. It was now seen as composed of equally licit individuals, *oamenii muncii* ('the working people') making up the socialist nation, a harmonious extended family (Verdery 1996: 64) centred around the Party. This evolution touched the very core of ideological legitimization and was responsible for the restricted access to the production of discourse about class. Instead, in an otherwise rigid discursive landscape the discourse of the nation was, as Katherine Verdery (1991) shows, a locus of debate and ideological elaboration.

The discourse of expert management posited that the society was a system which could be 'managed' or 'led' through scientific means – the Romanian term used was *știința conducerii*, literally, 'the science of leading'. The emphasis was placed upon technical expertise in administering what is otherwise simply a technical process. This discourse was a framework which favoured the agentless processes or processes with abstract agents, while the social actors were encouraged to be passive spectators or followers.

In both shifts in legitimization discussed above the intellectuals were foregrounded and given primacy. From 1971 on, the intellectuals were depicted as teachers of the people, responsible for educating the masses in the spirit of the official line, while in the discourse of expert management they were considered the 'brain' of the society and the central point of reference (for example, the working class is seen as in need of becoming an 'intellectual working class').

The discursive deactivation of classes could also be connected with the

workers' protests that erupted in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1970s and 1980s (in Romania, the miners' strike took place in Lupeni in 1977 and the Braşov workers' riots in 1987). After the 1977 strike, the regime reformulated class agency by insisting on workers' 'self-management' (Nelson 1980: 545) and by stimulating the 'participation' of the working class in leading society. Both were obviously 'simulated changes', to use Michael Shafir's (1985) term: while the stated goal was to empower to an extent the working class, its actions were described as reflexive and non-transactive, so the change in policy was formulated within the already existing Late Socialist schema of action. Thus, there was a discursive change prompted by the strike, but it was in consonance with what was already happening in the discourse. The deactivation of class that had already begun in the 1960s provided a background for these tactical moves towards the removal of political agency. For the authorities, the class issue (especially with reference to the working class) seemed to become what Tony Trew termed an 'awkward fact': something that threatens to disrupt the unity of the current state of affairs and has to be neutralized for the benefit of ideology (Trew 1979: 97). The careful treatment of classes in Late Socialism seems to indicate that the state-socialist political discourse was, in a way, convergent with the Western one, as an open ideological conflict and bald assertion of power were eliminated and replaced with a hegemonic mode of legitimization and governing, embedded in discourses which naturalized and normalized the existing situation through various linguistic means and tacitly assigned different subject positions to social actors.

Conclusion

This chapter investigated the changes in meaning-making practices in Romanian official discourse between the Stalinist and Late Socialist eras, using as a case study the representation of classes as central actors of the official ideology. The data analysis demonstrates that they undergo a process of 'neutralization' as they shift from being represented as autonomous agents in the dynamic and turbulent Stalinist years, to inert objects of a descriptive gaze in Late Socialism. Thus, the post-socialist irrelevance of the working class and peasantry noted in the literature (Kideckel 2002, 2008: 9–11; Ciobanu 2009) has deep roots, which seem to confirm that post-socialism was founded not only materially, but also conceptually on the active policies of the communist regime (Paretskaya 2010).

Methodologically, the findings of this chapter point in the direction opposite to the theories of the official discourse under communism that accentuate its opacifying features and the triviality of the meanings produced. The Party might have 'ascribed itself a central place in a self-made story, which is disconnected from the reality of experience', as Tom Casier puts it, but, as he argues further, the ideology was not a simple ornament, but a central pillar of the Soviet system (Casier 1999: 35). The ideology, defined as a practice and discourse which naturalizes a particular representation of reality in the service of maintaining unequal power

relations (Fairclough 1989: 33), is based crucially on the ideational layer of the meaning-making system (in which transactivity has a central place). Thus, evidence shows that the words do count even when it comes to authoritarian discourse. Moreover, a corpus of discourse cannot count as only ideational or interpersonal (roughly, the equivalent of constative and, respectively, performative in the terminology of pragmatics), but expresses at the same time both layers of meaning (and the additional textual one). Meanings, on the other hand, are not made only synchronically, as choices between alternative realizations. The official discourse has, in the words of Patrick Sériot, a 'beyond' or a textual memory (Sériot 1986c: 31; see also Ryazanova-Clarke in this volume) to which the texts make implicit reference (for example in nominalizations, it is a point in time when the verb expressed what in the present is expressed by a noun). In the case of class identity, this textual memory consisted of the Stalinist dynamic layer, on top of which the deactivating layers of post-Stalinism and Late Socialism were added. In the late 1980s, the potential meaning of class included not only what was articulated about it at that moment, but also this deactivating shift. So, the classes remained in the textual memory as a set of formerly significant actors which, somehow, lost their political relevance. Studying the authoritarian discourse has to include, thus, the historical study of these strata of meaning.

This approach to meaning-making allows us to discern evolutions and correlations and to make reasonable inferences about its causes, thus allowing the official discourse as an object of inquiry to leave the claustrophobic and over-determined territory of the *langue de bois* position. More generally, this diachronic and content-sensitive approach could destabilize some widely held assumptions, for instance, that the language use during communism had a monolithic character (Coumel 2002) or that the language of communism fell together with the regime, being followed by a language of truth and objectivity.

Notes

- 1 I understand representation as the recontextualization or objectivation of social practice: in the words of Theo van Leeuwen, 'what people do (is) transformed into the discourse of an institutional practice other than that in which it is actually done, a "way of doing" transformed into a "way of knowing"' (1993: 19). In a certain way, representing also means bringing some (absent) things into the presence of the speaker (Ankersmit 2002: 34). Language can be viewed as the semiotic plane of this process of bringing an absent thing into presence. It is also the place where meanings are made and contested. As language stands in a dialectical relation to practice, the representation of social reality is a central site of knowledge creation and, thus, of legitimizing certain social practices. Knowledge creation means also identity creation: here, I understand identity as a process of temporally organized positioning of social subjects in such a way that they can be considered 'the same' at different moments in time (Ricoeur 1992; Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 138).
- 2 For instance, a 1972 text speaks contradictorily about the working class as having a leading role in society, the Party being the leading force in society and, finally, the state having the function of steering the society in general (Romanian Communist Party 1973: 41–42, 56).

- 3 March defines the pre-political sphere of legitimation as 'a set of assumptions, or givens, generally not considered a matter of legitimate political disputation.' (2003: 308).
- 4 In Table 4.3, the figures express the percentage of the respective processes in the total number of processes the actors are represented as being involved in. The sum in each period is below 100 per cent because apart from these, the actors were also involved in mental and behavioural processes, which make up for the difference.
- 5 Here, Kenneth Jowitt's description of the new type of propagandists (the 'politinformators') is relevant:

They were drawn not from the ranks of workers and peasants but from the ranks of officials, economic managers, scientists, engineers, agronomists; in short, the professional stratum. They specialized in differentiated forms of propaganda. Their skills seemed to be aimed at new types of audiences – audiences that were more articulate, educated, urban, and skilled. Their competence appears to be based on manipulating select audiences with specialized information rather than haranguing mass audiences with symbolic slogans.

(Jowitt 1975: 84)

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5 Speaking Titoism

Student opposition and the socialist language regime of Yugoslavia

James Robertson

On 14 February 1961 the citizens of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia were awakened with the news that Patrice Lumumba, the face of the Congolese independence movement, had been assassinated. The following day hundreds of thousands of protesters gathered at rallies called by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) to condemn the assassination. In Belgrade 150,000 people demonstrated in the city centre carrying banners with slogans such as 'Africa to the Africans' and 'Down with colonialism'. At one point in the afternoon around 30,000 young protesters broke away from the main rally and marched to the Belgian embassy, which they began to pelt with rocks. When police were called to disperse the crowd, vicious brawls broke out. Some protesters managed to break the police lines and leapt into the embassy through the shattered windows. To cheers and chants, they threw out the furniture and set it alight on the street outside. Before eventually leaving the gutted building, a group of demonstrators hung a picture of Lumumba from the entrance and scrawled above it: 'Glory to the fighters for the freedom and peace of the African people!' (*Politika* 1961: 5).

From 1961 to 1974, conflicts between students and police became a common sight during official demonstrations in Yugoslavia. After anti-war demonstrators protesting the US invasion of Vietnam broke the windows of the US consulate in Zagreb in December 1966, police dispersed the crowd with tear gas and batons. Two years later, in June 1968, a brawl between students and police led to the week-long occupation of the University of Belgrade, in which student and faculty activists organized mass meetings that condemned the state bureaucracy, its protection of the political and economic elite and its failure to pursue the socialist revolution. The fact that these mass opposition movements expressed themselves through official socialist discourse poses a challenge to recent scholarship that has emphasized the disciplinary and homogenizing effects of state-socialist power. Against this line of interpretation, the present chapter foregrounds the ruptures and contradictions that opened spaces for opposition at the ideological heart of the socialist state. Using the case of Yugoslavia, I show how the country's political and economic reforms of the early 1950s and its increasing participation in transnational political, intellectual and cultural movements of the 1960s reconfigured the signifying chains of official ideology. This reconfiguration allowed a

conceptual differentiation between the cause of socialism and the Yugoslav state, in effect separating the language of socialism from its role as a medium of state power. The metonymic hinge that had bound the signifiers of state and socialism in the Soviet-authored discourse of socialism was dissolved on Yugoslav soil, and opened a space from which fully interpellated subjects could criticize state power.

In recent years, scholarship on the history of state-socialist regimes has moved away from the models of power set out by both the 'totalitarian' and 'revisionist' schools of Soviet history (Fitzpatrick 2007; Engerman 2009: 309–332). Critiquing these earlier methodological approaches, scholars such as Stephen Kotkin (1996), Joachen Hellbeck (2006), Igal Halfin (2000) and Amir Weiner (2001) draw on Michel Foucault's concepts of discipline, knowledge-power and subjectivation to argue that the political efficiency of socialist power lay not in its overt acts of repression, but in its creation and recreation of subjects. Key to this process was the practice of what Kotkin has termed 'speaking Bolshevik'. This refers to the ways in which Soviet citizens learned to use the official language of the state to speak, think and see like the state (Kotkin 1996: 198–237; Scott 1998). Kotkin saw this concept as essential in accounting for the overwhelming social cohesion, the lack of protest that characterized the period of High Stalinism; the Soviet state tamed one of the most recalcitrant working classes of Europe through the production and dissemination of an official language with transformative powers (Kotkin 1996: 14). Where the 'totalitarian' and 'revisionist' schools operated through a paradigm of power structured around a state/society dichotomy, Kotkin's approach effaced the gap between state, society and subject. Instead, he pointed to the total permeation of social space by discourse, and ascribed to official language an active role in structuring, re-enforcing and reproducing the conditions of state-socialist power. 'Speaking Bolshevik' is a valuable concept for understanding the role of official language in maintaining state-socialist power, but its derivation from a single, and unique historical case – the High Stalinism of the Soviet Union in the 1930s – limits its generalizability to other instances of state socialism. Furthermore, in its zeal to account for the counter-intuitive social coherence of the 1930s in the USSR, this type of argument overstates the degree to which the meanings of socialist language could be stabilized and pinned down and underestimates the capacity for meanings to slide; it is a model that is unable to explain instances of opposition, of contradictions and tears in official discourse of the type that occurred in Yugoslavia during the 1960s.

In his work on the Late Soviet period, Alexei Yurchak has highlighted precisely this instability of the socialist language regime and the state's inability to fully suture its discourse. Through his notion of the 'performative shift', he shows how the death and subsequent denunciation of Stalin in the 1950s destabilized the symbolic coordinates of the Soviet language regime. The discursive reconfiguration that followed changed the role of official language in Soviet ideology and led to a privileging of the performative dimension of speech at the expense of the constative. Official language, that is, became a form of speech

that located meaning in its reproduction of official rhetorical forms or discursive rituals, and over time a subject's actual investment in these structures became irrelevant for the state (Yurchak 2006: 25–26). The privileging of the performative actually had the unintended consequence of liberating the constative, allowing subjective meanings to 'slide' over time. One might, for example, attend a Komsomol meeting, vote and even contribute a speech (written in accordance with the correct rhetorical model, of course), and yet the personal significance attributed to the event may have had nothing to do with that which had been officially presupposed (for example, socializing with friends, sleeping or reading a book). Since the objective truth of official language was no longer guaranteed by Stalin or the state, it came to be understood by official and citizen alike to be a kind of political ritual, where meaning lay not in one's expression of opinion but in one's participation in and reproduction of official conventions (Yurchak 2003: 492). While Yurchak's work reveals the fragility of the language regimes of state socialism and the degree to which state officials were unable to close off the signifying fields of socialist discourse and anchor meaning in stable signifiers, his notion of the 'performative shift' is ill-suited to the situation of 1960s Yugoslavia. For the movements of the 1960s, as we shall soon see, the socialist language regime was not a set of petrified discursive performances, but a conscious framework through which subjects understood their relation to one another, to the state and to an international community of activists.

Drawing from both Yurchak and Kotkin, I will develop and broaden their theses by unpacking a particular mechanism at play in the notion of 'speaking Bolshevik' that both scholars have neglected: the metonymic hinge that bound the signifiers of 'socialism' and 'state'. Both scholars implicitly posit the state as integral to guaranteeing the privileged status of socialist language. For Kotkin, the state is understood to be isomorphic with official language, functioning less as a political institution and more as a discursive field of power; for Yurchak, the state's refusal to renew its 'editorial' role after 1956 led to the dissolution of the official language's metadiscursive status. Both approaches reveal the way in which Soviet communism established a metonymic relationship between the concepts of socialism and the state. These concepts functioned as master signifiers for the Soviet language regime; they were 'the factors that [gave] the articulated system of signifiers – that is, knowledge, belief, language – purchase on a subject' (Bracher 1994: 111) and made socialist discourse meaningful. The party/state, through its metadiscursive status, its institutional monopoly on the formation and reform of socialist language, came to stand in for socialism. In other words, the ideological structure of Stalinism relied on a discourse that installed a metonymic hinge between the master signifiers of 'state' and 'socialism', thereby authorizing and stitching into place official meanings.

This hinge was essential for suturing official language in such a way as to prevent emerging alternative meanings of socialism that might disrupt or realign established social relations. As the Lacanian theorist Geoff Boucher (2006: 279) has argued, *contra* Foucault, '[k]nowledge is not immediately power [...] it is power because a subject believes that this knowledge is authorized by a

convention. Hence the illocutionary force of an assertion relates the speaker to the authority of a consensus'. The state's continued ability to function as the determiner of this consensus was tied to the functioning of the metonymic hinge within the Soviet language regime. The anxiety with the state's symbolic role as an anchor of meanings in socialist language is shown by the hostility Stalinist officials displayed towards workers' independent initiatives (Kotkin 1996: 224). It was not (just) that the Soviet state saw conspiracies wherever it did not initiate and sustain activity; but (also) that such initiatives risked weakening the state's authorial monopoly. Official language, in order to remain a language of state power, had to be anchored in the master signifier of the state.

This concept of the metonymic hinge is essential for understanding the shifts that socialist language regimes have undergone outside of the Soviet context. It explains how an official language that valorized resistance, egalitarianism, collective power and direct democracy could be deployed to produce a docile and alienated population that by and large conformed to the officially prescribed social relations. It also helps to account for the possibilities for this regime to break down. Should the metonymic hinge break via conscious reform or the contingencies of historical events, should the language of socialism be divorced from the master signifier of the state, the official linguistic paradigm could not only facilitate disinterest and cynicism, as in Yurchak's account of the 'performative shift', but could cultivate opposition, mobilizing workers, students and oppressed minorities against their own state.

Anxieties of bureaucracy and stagnation: the birth of self-management

The metonymic hinge that tied the state to socialism in Stalinist discourse was dissolved in Yugoslavia during the series of reforms of the early 1950s. In the summer of 1948 the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was expelled from the Soviet-controlled Cominform following several confrontations between Yugoslav leaders and Stalin. The expulsion prompted Yugoslavs to return to the classics – Marx, Engels, Lenin – both to develop a socialist criticism of the USSR and to chart a new path for the development of socialism in their own country (Rusinow 1978: 50–52). In the work of prominent ideologues such as Edvard Kardelj and Milovan Djilas, the Soviet Union came to be seen as a bureaucratic state capitalist system, in which a party bureaucracy had installed itself as a new ruling class, exploiting the workers and peasants and pursuing an imperialist policy in Eastern Europe. Concerned that a similar 'statism' might lead to a stagnation of their own socialist revolution, party intellectuals proposed the idea of self-management socialism. They argued for the need to decentralize the organs of the state, to create spaces for free public debate at a local level, to introduce certain market mechanisms and for workers to replace state-appointed officials as managers of enterprises (Rusinow 1978: 55; Sher 1977: 5–13).

With regard to the official language regime of Yugoslav socialism, the most important legal change that took place between the years 1949 and 1953, as part

of the turn to self-management, was the separation of party and state. This decision, taken at the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in November 1952, was a logical concluding step in the process of decentralizing and democratizing state organs. If the criticism of the Soviet Union was that its party elite had become a new ruling bureaucratic class, then the only way to save the Yugoslav revolution from the same fate, it was argued, was to open state organs up to political debate (Rusinow 1978: 73–76). The party, now renamed the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, was to win the population to socialist ideas through debate and education and was, in theory at least, no longer guaranteed hegemony by its proximity to state institutions (*ibid.*: 73).

The point that must be emphasized here is that the self-management paradigm projected a socialism that valorized mass participation in ideological debates; in these debates, communists would compete with non-communists at their workplace, campus or neighbourhood. Correct ideology was no longer to be learned from textbooks or by blindly repeating official slogans, but was to emerge from free debate and the process of ideological struggle. In 1951, for example, the Student Union was made independent of both the LCY and the state; it was to become a space in which rank-and-file students engaged in debate with and, ideally, were influenced by activists from the LCY (Pervan 1978: 115). As one ideologue of the regime, Bora Drenovac, remarked in 1953: ‘For me, it isn’t important if a question creates chaos in the youth organization, it is good and we should let it be discussed ... what is dangerous is stagnation’ (cited in Lilly 2001: 240). In the same year, in a series of articles whose increasingly critical nature eventually led to his expulsion from the League, Milovan Djilas expressed a similar concern for mass political engagement:

[S]ince socialist reality exists and is progressing, a new socialist consciousness must appear, independent of officials and forums, and even against their will. Life does not wait on approval to live. Today, conscious socialist forces exist alongside official communist organizations, especially alongside and in opposition to many communist bureaucrats and forums. The conscious, so-called subjective forces are not confined to communists or politically-aware workers alone.... These forces also include all who stand for an independent Yugoslavia, a democratic and socialist Yugoslavia, because only such a Yugoslavia can be independent, regardless of whether these forces’ ideological and other conceptions coincide exactly with some so-called socialist, or even really socialist, dogmas ascribed to one bureaucrat or another.

(Djilas 1959: 106)

Djilas’ criticism of the ‘dogmas’ passed from bureaucrat to bureaucrat and Drenovac’s concern with ideological ‘stagnation’ capture effectively the LCY’s awareness of and distaste towards what Yurchak termed the ‘performative shift’. The 1952 law separating the LCY from the state and opening up the field of politics to ideological struggle was an attempt to de-alienate the language

of socialism, to liberate it from its bureaucratic shell. It reaffirmed the importance of the constative in opposition to the performative. In bringing about this reform, however, the Yugoslav leadership implicitly dissolved the metonymic relation that had allowed the state to stand in for socialism. From this moment on, it became possible to oppose state policy, even while firmly declaring one's fidelity to the socialist cause (Lilly 2001: 250).

Indeed, at times opposition and criticism were even encouraged, and this is the first point to recognize about the Yugoslav socialist language regime: it aimed to produce an engaged subject, one that actively participated in the everyday decision-making process that propelled the development of socialism. This subject, moreover, was one intended to understand itself as separate from and on guard against the rule of the bureaucracy. As Tito declared in 1950:

Does not [Lenin] show that bureaucracy flourishes precisely where people are not aware of their right to control, and to wage a decisive struggle against every bureaucratic procedure, where people are not yet aware that the presence of bureaucracy is detrimental to socialism, and it cannot be extirpated merely by decrees from above, but every conscious individual should fight against it in his everyday life.

(Tito 1963: 112)

The self-managing subject was one that kept an honest eye on the officials, ever ready to speak out against the abuse of power that would threaten the advancement of the revolution. Tito's quote also shows the way in which Yugoslav ideologues began to re-suture socialist discourse through alternative master signifiers (in this case Lenin, but we should also include Tito himself). The authority of Lenin was here invoked against that of Stalin and the Stalin-led Soviet state.

Of course, this professed vision of a self-managing society contrasted sharply with the continued dominance of LCY officials within the ranks of the state and in the management of workplaces – a state of affairs determined by the party's right to exist as the only politically organized force in the country, as well as by good old-fashioned corruption and bureaucratic wrangling. In addition, privileges, such as access to luxurious housing, consumer goods, foreign travel and resorts on the Adriatic – a key target of anti-Stalinist criticism directed at the Soviet Union – remained mostly untouched in Yugoslavia. As market reforms were introduced in the 1960s, economic inequalities even increased. The consequence of such a contrast between the ideal of a political system grounded on ideological debate and participatory democracy and the reality in which positions of power and privilege continued to be the sole preserve of LCY members, had the effect of strengthening the performative dimension of socialist language. Participation in the low-level economic and political decision-making bodies, whose influence was closely delimited by more senior state officials, once again took on the aspect of ritual, constantly provoking in the ranks of the LCY those same anxieties about the rise of 'bureaucratic dogma' and 'stagnation'.

The history of self-management socialism is, in many ways, a history of the LYC's repeated attempts to revolutionize its own discourse, to re-engage its population and to institutionalize vibrant ideological debate, all the while circumventing this debate and preventing it from articulating a serious challenge to the state's policies. As the Slovene cultural theorist, Renata Salecl, has argued, this self-revolutionizing discourse was a central pillar of the Yugoslav socialist ideology: 'Precisely because of this "revolutionary" nature, the ideology of self-management was able to neutralize critics of the system by stressing how the ideologists of self-management were themselves combating these problems' (Salecl 1994: 59). As the case of the student movement will show, this mechanism was an unstable one, and the Yugoslav leadership walked a fine line between cultivating a socialist discourse independent of official bureaucratic language and preventing this discourse from being used against the regime and its established foreign and domestic policies.

If it is the case that the self-management reforms undertaken by Yugoslav leaders in the early 1950s divorced the signifier of the state from that of socialism within official discourse, we must establish how this language maintained its hegemony without succumbing to the 'performative shift' Yurchak has identified. What is fascinating in the Yugoslav case is that for the student movement, until at least the mid-1970s, socialist discourse maintained a relative consistency in its meanings; it also maintained its hegemonic status, despite having been largely severed from the authority of the LCY and the state (Zukin 1975: 11). When protesters occupying their faculties in June 1968 unfurled banners reading 'Workers, we are with you!', this was not a form of everyday political ritual, a kind of Yugoslav equivalent of Havel's cynical greengrocer, but was, rather, a call to shape reality, to rekindle the worker-student struggle against the bureaucracy. Socialist language, then, continued to be conceived by student activists in line with that of the regime, as a transparent account of reality, but also as an instrument capable of transforming that reality. The language of socialism maintained its hegemonic status aside from, and even in opposition to, the political authority of the state. How was this possible?

Non-alignment, Third-Worldism and the globalization of socialist discourse

The answer lies in Yugoslavia's participation in a set of transnational discursive chains that shaped the global political climate of the 1960s. Alongside the political and economic reforms that provided the basis for self-management socialism, post-1948 Yugoslavia underwent a diplomatic revolution in the 1950s that significantly shaped the self-perception of Yugoslav citizens. Although poverty, political isolation and the threat of Soviet invasion prompted the leadership to accept military and economic aid from Western powers, in particular the US, by the late 1950s Yugoslavia had become a key a player, alongside Egypt and India, in the Non-Aligned Movement (Rusinow 1978: 44-47; Rubinstein 1970: 24-38). The Yugoslav discourse of

Third-Worldism had three key characteristics. First, its pivotal dichotomy was not the Cold War division of capitalist/communist but rather the opposition between the forces of peace, socialism and coexistence and those of war and imperialism (Rubinstein 1970: 119–140). Needless to say, in this redrawn world-picture the Soviet Union ended up on the side of imperialism. Woven into the cultural geography of Third-Worldism was a geopolitical teleology: the national movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America were presented as young, new and progressive forces whose victory over imperialism promised to inaugurate a new historical epoch of peace and stability. In an article celebrating Tito's 1963 trip of 'peace and friendship' to Latin America, a student reporter announced that the president would 'carry to us friendly words from the youth of the New World . . . , a New World, of which together we will take possession. We will not draw any borders because it is indivisible, our single future' (Nedeljkovic 1963: 1). The author of this text was deliberately appropriating the colonial language of a 'new world' and redeploying it along the eschatological timeline of revolutionary socialism, identifying the new post-colonial independence movements with the utopian aspirations once associated with the working class in the West. In the eyes of Yugoslav socialists, their own country, whose very existence had been won in a struggle with imperialism, had a special relationship to the newly emerging national liberation movements. Symbolic of the attempt to tie Yugoslavia's history to that of other colonized countries was the Yugoslav participation in the Asian Socialist Conference held in Rangoon in January 1953 (Rubinstein 1970: 40–42).

Membership in the Non-Aligned Movement redirected the antennae of Yugoslav ideology towards the post-colonial world and the struggles of anti-imperialist movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Newspapers closely followed events in Congo, Angola, Cuba, Morocco, Algeria, Palestine and Vietnam. Hundreds of students from the Third World came to study in the universities of Yugoslavia, where they quickly established their own political organizations to raise awareness of the plight of independence or socialist movements in their home countries (*Yugoslav Survey* 1960; SSJ 1966: 26–44). These students, in addition to organizing their own clubs, also worked alongside their Yugoslav colleagues in the Student Union's Clubs of International Friendship, which organized educational events devoted to the Third World. In 1969, for example, the Belgrade Marxist Circle, a study-group run by the Club of International Friendship, organized a seminar whose entire second day explored the politics of guerrilla movements in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Palestine (SSJ 1969). Even earlier, in January 1960, students at the University of Ljubljana formed an 'Anti-Colonial Club' to spearhead a movement 'against colonialism, racist politics and for the economic development of the underdeveloped countries' (SSJ 1960). Third-Worldism, a language of opposition in the Western democracies, became part of the official discourse of Yugoslav socialism, and throughout the 1960s both the state and the LCY sought to mobilize the population in campaigns to promote solidarity with the Third World (Markovic 1996: 104–106).

From the 1960s onwards, this internationalism was fostered by the LCY in demonstrations and Third-World solidarity campaigns. The cause of non-alignment became entwined with the emphasis on participation and engagement of self-management socialism. Workers, students and community groups were called upon to join in the struggle for international socialism by supporting their brothers and sisters in Congo, Algeria and Vietnam. The student press included reports on the activities of student movements around the world, and Yugoslav student unions sent delegates to international conferences, including the International Union of Students and the International Student Conference, as well as the Council of European National Youth, where they engaged in debates with activists from all 'three worlds' of the Cold War (Denning 2004). This international language of Third-Worldism is captured in the following newspaper report on the 1961 demonstration in solidarity with the Congolese independence movement:

There is not a citizen of our free city who has not been shaken by the news of Lumumba's death ... Belgrade is on its feet. The streets have become narrower. African students are on the shoulders of their Yugoslav comrades. The speeches are in Serbo-Croatian, but they are understood by all.

(*Politika* 1961: 5)

The insistence that all could understand the speeches, whether they spoke Serbo-Croatian or not, was intended to evoke precisely Yugoslavia's belonging to an international, socialist, anti-colonial community. It was because Yugoslavs spoke the *political* language of this international community that their messages were seen to transcend the particular national language of the speakers.

This internationalization of Yugoslav activism strengthened the authority of socialist language by anchoring it in a new set of signifiers drawn from the inventory of international socialist and anti-colonial politics. The shift between master signifiers allowed the Yugoslav socialist language regime to survive without the kind of discursive fraying Yurchak describes in the case of the Soviet Union. Consequently, the state was able to play a more 'liberal' role in Yugoslav society, without fear that the broader framework of social relations upon which it relied would be recast. This confidence, however, was poorly founded. The stitching of official language into new master signifiers, not metonymically bound to either the LCY or the state, created an environment in which the socialist language regime actually facilitated opposition to government policies.

This opposition was most clearly manifested in the conflicts between police and student demonstrators that took place throughout the decade. As we saw above, the 1961 campaign in solidarity with the Congolese led to street fights before the doors of the Belgian embassy, an event that embarrassed state officials who, anti-colonial rhetoric notwithstanding, were seeking closer economic ties with Western Europe. Again in November, 1964, students protesting the continued occupation of Congo fought police, this time in front of the US

consulate in Zagreb (SSJ 1964a: 422–426). In response to the police violence, an organization representing the students of Africa, Asia and Latin America in Zagreb composed a letter to the Central Committee of the LCY, expressing their bitterness. They demanded to know who had given the order for the police to attack their demonstration, and were even so bold as to inquire:

Following these events we are given to ask whether the government and communists in Croatia are really in solidarity with the Congolese patriots and all the forces in the world or whether it is otherwise? ... We ask whether the police are for or against our declaration in which we condemned imperialism?

(SSJ 1964a: 435–437)

The students suggested that sinister motives were behind the violence, and charged the authorities with acts of common racism. The brunt of the accusation, of course, was that the police and the Union of Students were undermining the international struggle of Third-World liberation. In a meeting between government officials and student demonstrators, one Sudanese student announced that ‘the brutal attitude of the [Zagreb] police, can only be compared to the actions of the imperialist police’ (SSJ 1964b: 139). The police violence, the student argued, threatened Yugoslavia’s position as a leader in the international struggle for Third-World emancipation. During the same meeting, as a group of Sudanese students warned that ‘because of this brutal act, the enemies of Yugoslavia will profit’, a recorder from the Union of Students scrawled ‘China’ in the margins of the official minutes (SSJ 1964b: 139). This note registers the anxiety Yugoslav officials felt towards China and the international Maoist movements, which provided a powerful pole of attraction for young radicals during the 1960s; it also indicates the extent to which LCY leaders were sensitive to how they were perceived by an international community of activists. The tendency for the students to map their own struggle with the Zagreb police onto the wider struggle between imperialism and the national liberation movements of the Third World also reveals the ways in which students themselves were interpellated by an international socialist discourse. The interpellative power of socialist discourse in Yugoslavia brought students into international discursive chains that reached from Sarajevo to Saigon, from Kinshasa to Krakow, and from Berlin to Berkeley.

The position of the Yugoslav government in the eyes of international social movements continued to be a sore spot for student activists in their growing engagement with the war in Vietnam. In December 1966, during a week of action in solidarity with the Vietnamese people, police violently broke up student demonstrations amassing in front of US buildings in both Belgrade and Zagreb (*Borba* 1966a, 1966b). In the next issue of the Zagreb University newspaper, *Studentski list*, student editors translated and published coverage of the events by foreign news agencies, including an article from a Beijing newspaper, which argued that the police violence confirmed Tito’s ‘service to the American

imperialist aggression in Vietnam' (*Studentski list* 1967a). Only weeks later, in January 1967, the far-left activist Vesna Gudelj-Velaga won the presidency of the Zagreb University Student Union. A key objective of her campaign had been to address widespread concerns among the student body with Yugoslavia's poor participation in the international student movement, which, she reportedly exclaimed in a public meeting, 'has even drawn criticism from students in *capitalist* countries!' (*Studentski list* 1967b). Opposition student activists were particularly angered at the Yugoslav state's refusal to adopt a more 'revolutionary' position on the conflict between the Viet Cong and the US. In a mass meeting held during the June 1968 occupation of the University of Belgrade, for example, one student publicly condemned what he saw to be Yugoslavia's conservative policy on Vietnam:

In short, [the Yugoslav ambassador to the UN] said that the Viet Cong and the United States are equally guilty in Viet Nam. I am insulted by that! A more reactionary view of the world revolution one could not imagine!

(Plamenic 1969: 72)

The student was seizing on a contradiction at the heart of Yugoslav foreign policy: on the one hand, cultivating diplomatic and trade links with the independent powers of the post-colonial world; on the other, preserving its ties to Western economic and military powers, foremost among them, the United States. The contradiction was not lost on student activists who spoke the same language as the regime: this was a betrayal of the 'world revolution', and students, fully interpellated by official discourse, felt responsibility to challenge their state from below. These examples of student opposition reveal the ways in which the discursive authority of an imagined international socialist community could be used to stitch a new meaning through official discourse, suturing the socialist language regime in such a way as to leave the state and the party vulnerable to opposition. This was not simply a case of negotiating in the language of the state; it was an indication of the way in which official language could interpellate subjects in direct opposition to the state. Unlike the closed world of 1930s Soviet Russia described by Kotkin, in which Stalinist discourse could win almost total hegemony (Kotkin 1996: 225), Yugoslavia's participation in the non-aligned movement contributed to the opening up of socialist discourse and further weakening the state's authority. With the violent actions of the police and the contradiction between the LCY's radical socialist and anti-colonial rhetoric and conservative political practice, the conditions were ripe for a radicalization of the student opposition.

Belgrade 1968: socialism against the state

The growing radicalization of the student movements reached its apex in the week-long occupation of the University of Belgrade in June 1968. Throughout this protest and in the years immediately following it, student opposition to the state was expressed in the language of self-management socialism, and its demands were

conceived by participants as a furthering of Yugoslavia's socialist revolution. The wave of protests that culminated in the occupation began on the morning of Monday, 3 June. In the sparsely developed suburb of New Belgrade a crowd of several thousand gathered at the student dormitories to protest an incident of police violence against a group of students the night before. Under banners that read 'For equality', 'Do we have a constitution?' and 'For the freedom of press and demonstration', as well as red flags and portraits of Marx, Tito and Che, speakers demanded the resignation of the chief of police and the directors of the main television stations and newspapers. The protesters alleged that the state media had refused to air their criticisms of the bureaucracy. A report from the demonstration noted:

In their speeches, students pointed to all the expressions of social differentiation in society, to the problem of unemployment, to the strengthening of private property and the unmerited enrichment of one strata, to the difficult position of the majority of the working class and to the need for the consistent and equal division of work. These speeches were interrupted by powerful applause and chants: 'Students – Workers', 'We are the sons of the working people', 'Down with the socialist bourgeoisie' and 'Freedom of press and demonstration'.

(Otasevic 1968)

This report, one of the first to publicize the protest, highlights the ideological orthodoxy of the student movement: the concern with social inequality, the suffering of the working class and the injustice of privileges accrued to economic and political elites. This was the language of self-management socialism turned against the Yugoslav state. As the students attempted to march from their dormitories in the periphery of Belgrade to the city centre, they were met by cordons of riot police who blocked their route. In the ensuing scuffles, over 100 demonstrators were badly injured. News of the police actions was circulated by students throughout the city and before the end of the day students and faculty, including leading members of the LCY's university cells, had occupied their faculties in protest. At the same time students at a mass meeting in the dorms drew up a statement defending the protests and outlining their demands:

- 1 We believe that the basic problem in our society is the phenomenon of social inequality. In this regard we demand: the consistent distribution of work; energetic action against the unsocialist principle of enrichment; that the social structures of the student body accurately reflect the structures of society; the abolition of all privileges which exist in our society.

[...]

- 3 The existence of strong bureaucratic forces in our society demands: the democratization of all social-political organizations, especially the League of Communists; the democratization of all means of information and formation of public opinion; the freedom of meetings and demonstrations.

- 4 The students are particularly bitter about the situation in our universities. This demands: [...] the equal participation of students in all those forums concerned with the solutions of basic social problems, and above all, those questions that relate directly and indirectly to students; we condemn the phenomenon of clans and monopolies in single departments and demand a sharp struggle against this; we demand complete and democratic reappointment of the entire teaching staff; we demand the free enrolment of students.

(Praxis 1971: 62–63)

The statement is notable for its close adherence to the official language of socialist self-management. Consider, for example, the attempt to stage the problems of the university as a problem of the self-managing workplace; the appeal to the authority of socialism in order to attack social inequality; the identification of ‘strong bureaucratic forces’ as a threat to the building of socialism; and the call for greater decentralization and democratization of existing institutions as a means of combating this bureaucracy. This was the same discourse of anti-Stalinist socialism that the leadership of the LCY had woven during the early 1950s. In other words, the students’ language of opposition explicitly redeployed terms from the official rhetoric of self-management socialism, only now directed against the state. This was not an instance of students ‘negotiating’ in the language of the regime, or of ‘taking the state at its word’ in order to satisfy their own interests, so much as it was a criticism of the state’s policies for standing in the way of socialist revolution (Straughn 2005). It is also worth noting that while the protests in solidarity with the Third World operated in a discourse sutured by the authority of an international socialist community, the protests of 1968 bring to prominence a second master signifier: the Yugoslav working class.

The occupation of the university lasted for the rest of the week, during which time students implemented their own form of self-management by electing representatives to ‘action committees’, similar to those that had been formed a month earlier during the student uprisings in Paris. These committees oversaw the maintenance of the protests, organizing food supply, defence from police and provocateurs and negotiations with the regime. The occupied university was renamed the ‘Red University of Karl Marx’, and from the windows of the buildings students hung red flags, portraits of Marx, Lenin and Tito and banners carrying such slogans as: ‘Workers, we are with you’ – ‘Down with the red bourgeoisie’ – ‘Bureaucrats, hands off workers!’ – ‘We don’t want democracy in steel helmets’ (Rusinow 1968: 50). The occupation quickly inspired solidarity actions on campuses around the country, including Nis, Novi Sad, Sarajevo, Titograd, Ljubljana and Zagreb. Throughout the week, students turned classes into mass open-air meetings whose participants debated the strategy of the movement and openly aired their criticism of the state bureaucracy. Consistent throughout these declarations were appeals to the ideological authority of the working class. In a letter to a local factory, for example, one action committee declared: ‘We are enraged at the social and economic differences in our society.

We are for social self-management from the bottom to the top. We are against all enrichment of individuals at the expense of the working class' (Praxis 1971: 102). A letter to Tito, composed during another meeting, read:

We are bitter that bureaucratic interests aspire to break the brotherhood and unity of our people. We will not allow them to bring down the opposition of the workers and students. The interests of the working class are universal interests and these are the only true interests of socialism.

(Ibid.: 83–84)

Some faculties sent delegations to factories, carrying messages of solidarity and calling for a united student–worker struggle against the bureaucracy. LCY officials, however, saw to it that most delegations were refused entry at the gates, and some factory committees organized responses from workplaces that, while claiming to support the students' demands, condemned the 'disruptive' means of the student protest (ibid.: 89). That the LCY sought to mobilize factory committees in their efforts to isolate the student movement is significant: it amounted to the recognition of the authorial status attributed to the working class by the official discursive regime. That is to say, the internal logic of the Yugoslav socialist language regime led both the LCY and the students to the doors of factories to seek support from the workers and, through it, also discursive legitimacy.

Over the course of the week, the repressive apparatuses of the state were held at bay, while LCY activists, who had participated in the occupation from the first day, attempted to co-opt the movement by channelling its demands into the program of LCY reformers. Only by the end of the week, when this strategy had seemed to fail, did the state begin to intervene. On the evening of Saturday 8 June, police broke into the Faculty of Arts where they beat and arrested several students. Intimidation by the police, an increasingly hostile press, and the intervention of pro-regime activists had, by the end of the week, marginalized the more radical elements of the movement. Tito himself brought the occupation to an end on Sunday, 9 June, in a speech, broadcast on national television and radio, in which he celebrated the students for their responsibility, confirmed that their criticism touched on serious social problems and asked students to give him their support in finding a solution:

This time I promise that I will push for a comprehensive solution to the students' problems, and towards this end I ask the students to help me. Furthermore, if I am unable to solve these questions then I should no longer be in this place.

(Praxis 1971: 340)

Even within this speech, the president felt compelled to draw a discreet line between his own authority and that of the socialist revolution. Although undoubtedly Tito was capable of functioning as a master signifier within the

Yugoslav socialist language regime, by calling on the support of the students and questioning the legitimacy of his own rule, his speech implies the absence of a strong metonymic tie between his political authority and socialism.

Tito's speech was met with jubilation from the majority of students, who immediately left the university buildings and proceeded to celebrate in the streets. Only a handful of the more radical activists voiced their suspicions that the president's promise was a hollow gesture. Over the following weeks these suspicions were confirmed: police forcibly shut down the remaining action committees; officials in the state bureaucracy began to move against members of the Marxist philosophy circle *Praxis*, who had vocally supported the occupation; and the Belgrade public attorney banned selected issues of *Student* (Praxis 1971: 370). Despite these repressions, however, the embers of the movement continued to burn, and the movement's resistance to the state continued to be articulated through the official discursive framework of self-management socialism. The year 1974 seems to mark, if not the end, then certainly a significant downturn in the activity of the movement, largely attributable to repression by the regime. That year, in response to state and LCY officials' continued attacks on prominent Marxist faculty at the University of Belgrade, philosophy students at the Universities of Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana held protest meetings, occupied faculty buildings and composed documents attacking the bureaucracy's deviation from the program of self-management. In a document outlining their demands, they noted that:

Although the League of Communists of Yugoslavia proclaimed workers' self-management in 1950 [...] we see that [...] the working class still lacks decisive influence in the economic and political spheres, that social power is concentrated in the hands of a political and economic elite, that the distribution of income is dependent not on labour but on capital and the mediation of the market, that social differences have continued to grow and present a burning danger to the achievements of the revolution.

(Popov 1989: 134–135)

Again, the concerns of students were shaped by and articulated through a language that presumed an irresolvable class antagonism dividing workers and students from the bureaucracy. Once again, the discursive authority of the working class anchored the chain of meaning in which state and LCY bureaucracy were identified as a threat to the revolution: 'We are for: the kind of self-management socialism in which the proletariat through workers' democracy, a specific form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, will decisively smash all forms of exploitation, monopoly and privilege' (ibid.: 135). Despite, or, more likely, because of the discursive orthodoxy of this movement, the regime was forced to rely on the means of physical, legal and institutional repression at its disposal, arresting leading activists and launching a smear campaign in the press. Those layers of the movement committed to the language of self-management socialism were driven underground, arrested or forced into exile.

The history of the student movement in Yugoslavia makes it patent that the language regime of Yugoslav socialism in no way dissolved the possibilities for opposition to state policy. On the contrary, it framed such possibilities. The exhortative language of the regime, its desire to engage the population, particularly the youth, in struggles on the domestic and international fronts, and the dissolution of the state/socialism metonym in 1952, opened the state to an internal critique from the state's own subjects. Official language was a principal instrument for transforming and reproducing the matrix of social relations inaugurated by state-socialist regimes. It functioned not only as a means of justifying the rule of an ideologically committed party, but as a formative power acting upon the very subjectivity of citizens. The discursive field of state socialism was the best guarantee of state hegemony, however, it also opened possibilities for mass opposition and contestation. The official language regimes functioned not as spheres of unconditional indoctrination, but as fields of struggle. Taking as normative the case of Stalinist Russia, from which Kotkin distills the notion of 'speaking Bolshevik', risks overlooking the alterations state-socialist discursive regimes underwent during the twentieth century as the communist project spread from Moscow to Maputo, Beijing to Belgrade.

The advance of communist projects over vastly different social terrain and specific historical conjunctions resulted in different configurations of socialist ideology and discourse. Geopolitical and factional disputes such as the 1948 excommunication of Yugoslavia, Krushchev's secret speech or the Chinese Cultural Revolution tore the discursive fabric of official ideological regimes. In such moments of crisis ideologues were forced to re-suture official language through alternative master signifiers, sometimes plucked from their respective national histories (in the 1980s Italian communists turned to Gramsci to distance themselves from the collapsing Soviet Union), from a seemingly more 'authentic' socialist past (Lenin was to the Yugoslavs after 1948 as Stalin was to the Chinese after the Sino-Soviet split), or from an increasingly globalized network of socialist and anti-colonial struggles. Appreciating the diversity of socialist language regimes in the twentieth century requires a greater understanding of the mechanisms that were involved in the stitching of particular master signifiers, particularly as this discourse spread, in the decades following the Second World War, from the closed environment of the USSR into a broad international arena. This paper has highlighted one such mechanism, the metonymic hinge, which was essential for maintaining the state's authorial status over socialist language. Expressed quite literally, the cause of socialism was 'hung' onto the signifier of the state. This dependence constrained the production of meaning in socialist discourse, as it greatly inhibited criticism of state policies. When, following the 1948 split, the hinge malfunctioned, the discourse of Yugoslav socialism was re-sutured in alternative master signifiers and, thereby, reinvigorated. No longer tied to the political authority of party and state, the socialist discursive field could and did become a battleground in which fully interpellated subjects critiqued and openly challenged the political legitimacy of those in power. The official language regime, that is, came into conflict with the political regime of the Yugoslav state.

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6 Deviant dialectics

Intertextuality, voice and emotion in Czechoslovak socialist *Kritika*

Jonathan L. Larson

A retrospective glance at the languages of state socialism in East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union allows us to revisit that era with the benefit of analytical tools and perspectives that were unavailable at the time. For instance, we benefit from different conceptualizations of language that scholars have developed over the past two decades. The North American sub-field of linguistic anthropology never took up the study of Communist discourse, but it has something valuable to offer in such an endeavour. A linguistic anthropologist might ask of the study of ‘post-totalitarian’ discourse: to what extent should we still write about Communist language in the singular, about ‘the’ semiotic system, or ‘the’ discourse culture, of the period? How firm was its domination over discursive production? And how have our suppositions regarding language, discourse and communication influenced our understanding of state-socialist lifeworlds?

This chapter seeks to open new lines of inquiry into the language regimes of state socialism through a linguistic anthropological reading of a pair of discursive practices central to Party discourse in the former Czechoslovakia and elsewhere: criticism and self-criticism. ‘Communist language’ has been studied often in terms of syntax and semantics, and – not unjustifiably – has been accused of deadening critical thought, especially in regard to questions of politics, society, aesthetics and history. The approach to language I adopt here, which operates in terms other than those of reference and logic, does not deny the structuring of thought by language. For many anthropologists, this proposition is a truism, borne out by cross-cultural discoveries about how ideologies of language and grammatical categories can influence ideas about the world, *regardless* of political system (Woolard 1998). However, in this chapter I will map some features of Communist criticism and self-criticism that clarify how Party discourse could successfully drive out the expression of transgressive alternatives, with some implications for interiorized critical thought. Party discourse did so significantly, I argue, through the surprising presence of emotion in this alleged ‘language of wood’. We see this when we attend to the phenomena essential for understanding actual communicative and discursive activity, namely, register, voice and intertextuality.

My analysis bears some resemblance to that of Alexei Yurchak's (2006) study of official language in Late Soviet socialism. In it is shown a remarkable intertextual transfer, as chunks of discourse from one speech, document or report find their way into another, regimented in particular by the voice of the singular political authority that was Stalin. Under these conditions, Yurchak argues, the official idiom could only shift or drift in terms of the balance between referential and performative functions of communicative acts. Where I diverge from Yurchak's helpful focus on intertextuality, voice and heterogeneity of Party discourse is my specific focus on the dynamics governing genres of criticism and self-criticism in socialist Czechoslovakia. In shifting the target of analysis from 'texts' to discursive events organized by genre and register, I submit that we can break down homogenizing notions of 'Party language', including Yurchak's, into more situated readings (this would, in fact, bolster Yurchak's more valuable argument for complex appreciation of Late Soviet subjectivities). My case study of Czechoslovakia, I submit, holds valuable insights for studying the languages of state socialism more broadly.

In what follows, I will first summarize a few major accounts of Party discourse. Some of these have focused on syntax and semantics, and have invariably featured claims as to how Party discourse influenced logic and the categories through which socialist subjects were capable of understanding the world. Yet as work in linguistic anthropology has shown over the past several decades, the 'ideologies of language' that influence how different populations make sense of their social realities also influences scholarship, which too depends on linguistic models. While approaches to language, discourse and communication are still evolving, I point to a few more recently developed analytical tools that have not been deployed in existing accounts of Party discourse.

The chapter's second part sketches a history of *kritika* (criticism) and *sebakritika* (self-criticism) as these genres were introduced into Czechoslovakia from the Soviet Union during the period from the late 1940s to the 1960s. I outline the emergence of two registers: what I call 'textbook *kritika*' and censure. Each register embodied or projected differently voiced sentiments and different understandings of responsibility through vectors of address and shifting participant roles of 'us' and 'them'. Textbook *kritika* featured an 'us' of shared commitment and responsibility (or care) against an infuriating 'them' of reactionary global political forces; while censure projected an 'us' of fragile coherence threatened by the traitorous scheming of an internal 'them'. One register of *kritika* did not replace another; rather, these registers coexisted, often within the same discursive events. They made *kritika* a heteroglossic and polyvalent practice. To map some of these pragmatics of *kritika* and ways that they were invested with emotion, I describe the case of one intellectual, Pavol Števček, whom several columnists criticized severely in the second half of 1969; these attacks foreshadowed and eventually led to his expulsion from public life. We will see how Števček's previous published texts were re-entextualized against him and how these criticisms indexed both registers of *kritika*, creating double-voiced innuendo of care seemingly intended to marginalize Števček and intimidate a wider audience.

By describing the enregisterment of a genre, its intertextual constitution through devices such as reported speech, the semiotics of address and inherent heteroglossia, this chapter builds on recent investigations into socialist subjectivities while aiming to open channels for exploring the heterogeneity of socialist discourses. Rather than continue the long-running fascination in studies of Party discourse with how the Party's manipulation or even 'corruption' of language sought to, or actually did, manipulate people's worldviews and ability to think critically, I seek to shift the discussion to the terrain of intersubjectivity. As I noted earlier, my findings here support well-established pictures of period language serving political control. However, I hope to offer an alternative that both adds sophistication to how we understand the nature of that control and helps develop a new analytical language for the study of socialist lifeworlds.

Patterns in the study of Communist discourse

Late twentieth-century social-scientific accounts of 'totalitarian language' owe much to literary sources from the middle of the century. By the 1940s, émigré Hungarian author Arthur Koestler and British writer George Orwell drew on impressions they had been gathering at a distance to portray a general style of political discourse and rhetoric emergent in the ideologies of Communism and Nazism. While Orwell did so in a fantastical plot set in the future (the year 1984), Koestler set his 1941 novel *Darkness at Noon* in the Soviet Union during interwar Stalinism. Central to both representations of totalitarian language was the style of argumentation, specifically Communist dialectics, which sought to make people into socialist subjects by persuading them to align themselves with the forces of history (as harnessed by the Communist Party). This argumentation took place in public media as well as in face-to-face sessions of political criticism (and self-criticism) among the cadre, in other words, in contexts that foreclosed the possibility of challenging the Party's interpretation of reality and turned deviant views against themselves.

Orwell's and Koestler's novels argued that what was happening to Party discourse in Eastern and Central Europe was having a dramatic effect on public discourse. To the extent that a political party with a highly developed ideological agenda, such as any of the region's Communist parties, took power and succeeded in regimenting public discourse according to the norms of its own discourse, we might speak more broadly of *official discourse*. These initial distinctions are useful for the case study of *kritika* and *sebakritika* in Czechoslovakia that I will present later on.

But Orwell and Koestler's works were novels, not linguistic studies, and otherwise did not develop a lexicon for describing the paradigms of totalitarian language that fascinated these authors. By the time of *perestroika* in the late 1980s, substantial scholarly efforts in that direction were being made. Studies by Françoise Thom (1989) and John Wesley Young (1991) sought to outline comparative features of 'Newspeak' and 'totalitarian language'. Drawing some inspiration from the study of Nazi discourse offered in the diary of philologist Victor

Klemperer (2000 [1957]), Thom and Young characterized the language of Communist parties as Manichean, totalizing and belligerent. They showed how in its syntax, vocabulary and style each party's rhetorical patterns erased individual features of speaking subjects, exhorted to ever-greater achievements and victories over global capitalist forces, and negated alternative treatments of political and social reality. Above all, the remarkable uniformity, ponderous tone and bureaucratic occlusion of meaning in Communist discourse across Europe led to a characterization of it as 'wooden'.

Thom also sought to unpack a feature of Orwell's *Newspeak* and Koestler's criticism and self-criticism known to philosophers and intellectual historians: their dialectics. She mapped a direct descent in argumentative style from texts authored by Hegel, Marx and nineteenth-century German contemporaries to twentieth-century Soviet and French Communist media. Thom claimed that *Newspeak* 'paralyze[d] reason' by explaining contradictory reality in terms of unfolding world-historical patterns such as the opposition of 'progressive' and 'reactionary' forces, 'content' and 'form', and 'concrete' and 'abstract' (1989: 88–89). She argued that dialectical thinking, particularly in its Communist manifestations, depends to a greater extent upon the mind itself than other forms of thought, such as empirical analysis (a point also made by David 2005, among others). This reliance on the mind at the expense of empirical evidence, she maintained, made thinking subjects vulnerable to distortions of language, and in turn, reality.

To the extent that these pioneering scholarly works focused on syntax, semantics and their influences on thought, their approach was consistent with theories of totalitarianism and language prevalent at the time and, to a significant degree, even today. They seem to have assumed either the hegemony of this kind of discourse over the entire social space or its domination over individual interiority. According to recent scholarship on ideologies of language, they reflect deeply embedded suppositions in the Western world about language as communication that have been found to be neither cross-culturally universal nor consistent with empirical findings on what other kinds of features matter in communicative events (Woolard 1998; Silver 1977, 1979; Irvine and Gal 2000).

In the past decade several social researchers have recognized the importance of questions of language and thought for reassessing the understanding of power and social reproduction during the period. They have delved into archives and other primary sources to describe period political discourse more ethnographically, as localized practice. I will presently touch on two of these researches and highlight some features of language that are important for my case study to follow.

In his recent monograph *Political Epistemics*, sociologist Andreas Glaeser (2011) has richly and sympathetically outlined the traps of local (dialectical) epistemics for dissidents and state officials (particularly the secret police) in the GDR. His account of institutionally grounded Party discourse draws on Thom (1989) while exploring a different terrain: some of the genres, registers and

contexts of criticism and self-criticism. Glaeser begins with an attempt to understand the philosophical underpinnings of GDR socialism, such as the incorporation of nineteenth-century dialectical and Marxian thought into the apparatus of a vanguard revolutionary party (in the GDR, the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, or SED). He also traces the dynamics within the SED that made dialectical political criticism personal, and the personal subject to the dialectic. Glaeser very helpfully highlights the intertwining of dialectic and personalized critique, thus going beyond political historian Jan Gross's earlier analyses of how criticism qua denunciation could serve as a 'privatization of the state' (1982; see also Larson 2013: 104–131). Glaeser points out how belligerent and sarcastic tones in Communist discourse, a feature noted by Thom and others, served not only to demonize an enemy but also to destroy any discursive evidence of sympathies for a political opposition on the part of the speaker.

Glaeser's book has opened new ways to look at Party and official discourse in terms other than syntax, semantics and a crude notion of political domination. Yet it still implies homogeneous meaning, as if the GDR consisted of a uniform discursive community, in a space primed for interpreting communicative signs in an unambiguous fashion. In fact, the ways in which Party criticism was understood (even in the specific contexts Glaeser describes) may have been unstable and simultaneously diverse (as I will suggest on the basis of my own case study). It should also be pointed out that Glaeser's account of Party criticism, for all its attention to the *development* of official discourse, ends up being excessively linear. The history of the GDR seems to suggest a fairly clear and steady trajectory from nineteenth-century philosophy, to interwar cadre, to relatively well-developed post-War Party cadre (at least in comparison to a context such as socialist Slovakia, where the trajectory from nineteenth-century philosophy to post-War cadre was much delayed, then swifter and more tumultuous). As it does not address the possibility of alternative forms penetrating the tightly sealed system of Party discourse, the study ends up presenting a suspiciously uniform picture of ideological-linguistic practice.

The second study with direct relevance to my research is Yurchak's aforementioned exploration of official language in the Late Soviet period (2006). Yurchak's sketch of 'authoritative discourse' arrives at conclusions very similar to Thom's regarding a 'hypernormalization' of Party discourse, or its remarkable intertextual fixity, particularly after the death of Stalin. Like Thom, Yurchak draws on the idea that communicative acts serve different 'functions'. Employing John Austin's model of the speech act's two functions – the constative and performative – Yurchak argues that Communist discourse increasingly assumed the latter function, privileging reproduction of form over transmission of clear, informative content. According to Yurchak, this 'performative shift' enabled a vast alternative lifeworld in the Soviet Union, one integrated with, but distinct from, the lifeworld of the Party. Yet while Thom made at least a passing reference to Roman Jakobson's model of linguistic functions (1989: 95–99), Yurchak finds no use for it. How might Jakobson's attention to functions such as the expression of emotion, hailing (addressing) someone or metalinguistically

expressing a belief about the working of language itself, change Yurchak's model of Party discourse?¹

British anthropologist Caroline Humphrey (2008) has recently pointed out that where or how one looks at 'official discourse' can influence one's understanding of it. Her approach to Communist discourse focuses on bureaucrats, and not the younger and more cosmopolitan population that is the subject of Yurchak's study. She notes significant disagreement over Party discourse *before* it circulated publicly, as well as evidence of diverse registers and varieties drawn upon in Party contexts (see also Lemon 2002; Sériot 1990). One consequence that Humphrey and Alaina Lemon (2008) have highlighted is that scholars to date have mostly missed the significance of emotion, affect or sentiment in Party discourse. Françoise Thom, in fact, noted a not infrequent emotionality in Newspeak. However, Thom compartmentalized it within an emergent register of 'pathos', which alternates with a 'scientoidal' devoid of emotion. This emotionality breaks loose *because of* language's unhinging from thought (Thom 1989: 54–56); it also serves Newspeak's hegemony by 'frustrat[ing] the understanding whilst corrupting it by an illusion of all embracing knowledge' (ibid.: 91). Thom thereby deferred to a dominant assumption in Western public discourse, one that posits a norm of reason; emotion or sentiment is perceived only as a violation of it (see, for example, Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990).

The foregoing review of scholarship has highlighted promising advances in thinking and analytical tools on which I plan to build in my own case study of *kritika* and *sebakritika* in socialist Czechoslovakia. My approach utilizes some of Roman Jakobson's functions of language that have not been utilized in Yurchak's study (namely, the emotive, phatic and metalingual). Attention to these functions expands our understanding of communicative complexity and helps us realize how 'meaning' is fragmented, tenuous and emergent at micro levels of interaction. If this approach happens to remind some readers of Mikhail Bakhtin, this is very much an intended effect. I will be relying on linguistic anthropologists' use of Bakhtin's concept of *dialogicity* in language to advance a heteroglossic and intersubjective understanding of language in which interlocutors are not fixed and unified subjects in time and space; rather, they are dialogically co-dependent, one's discourse appearing at each moment as 'half someone else's' (Bakhtin 1981; Tedlock and Mannheim 1995).

In what follows, I describe 'macro' social forces tugging for control of *kritika* and 'micro' skirmishes over the framing – and wider interpretation – of one intellectual's critique of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia from late 1968 to early 1969. Sentiments of proud duty, outrage, fear, defensive sarcasm and mockery inhabited *kritika*. Only in attending to their contextual workings and functions can we begin to see additional features traditionally outside the purview of formal linguistics but important for understanding the language practices of state socialism. Mapping more precisely the linguistic features of criticism and self-criticism helps us see both the problematic nature of homogenizing, totalizing and universalizing characterizations of Party and official discourse and the more complex influence of discourse on subjectivities.

Textbook *kritika*: revolutionary care and duty

Criticism and self-criticism were paired genres integral to the discursive practices of Central and Eastern European Communist parties. Within a worldview that conceived of Communist parties as the only legitimate vanguard of progressive historical movements, the political checks and balances of multi-party democracy were rendered obsolete. In socialist one-party states, their place was taken by formally codified practices of criticism and self-criticism, which served to prevent abuses of power, incompetent rule and misguided interpretations of how to advance the course of history.

After it took power in 1948, the *Komunistická strana Československa* (hereafter KSČ) charged *kritika* (criticism) and *sebakritika* (self-criticism) with the same general social functions found in the Soviet Union during the Stalin period: performing in public one's conviction of the righteousness of the communist path, providing a check on potential mistakes the Party might have made, and exposing 'enemies within' (Kharkhordin 1999: 148; Kojevnikov 2000: 153). We might characterize this set of functions as making up a register of 'textbook *kritika*': the rules for *kritika* that were taught in political lessons and promoted in Party literature. This register was governed by an ideology of rational discourse captured well in the formula that several Slovak and Czech informants have repeated to me: 'Each *kritika* should be objective – disinterested and constructive – and should suggest a form of solution'.² Although Communists may have been encouraged in educational settings such as youth organizations to practise *kritika* and *sebakritika* as zealous devotion, and many may have struggled with this self-objectification, they were taught to sublimate subjective sentiments to an objective performance of these acts in the name of advancing socialism.³

The register of 'textbook *kritika*' presumed sincerity that spurts from grassroots activity. The leadership of the KSČ called repeatedly for initiative 'from below', for instance, from workers who offered 'constructive' (*budovatel'ské*) innovations. To the extent that constructive suggestions by non-Party members in workplaces might involve a negative evaluation of matters entrusted to a Party official, this step was a first 'taking public' of a Party genre. Yet, as scholars have found in the case of the Soviet Union (for example, Kharkhordin 1999: 147), a strong tendency seems to have flourished – much to the chagrin of some in the Party leadership – for socialist Czechoslovaks to orient their discourse of *kritika* either towards what those 'above' had already stated, or what they seemed to want to hear. Moreover, those 'above' were seldom subject to criticism from those 'below' and rarely expected to perform levelling acts of self-criticism, whereas those 'below' were often subject to criticism from 'above' and frequently pressured to profess responsibility that was not necessarily theirs to take on. In 1956, eight years after the KSČ took power in Czechoslovakia, the satirical periodical *Dikobraz* published an illustration in advance of the second congress of the KSČ (see Figure 6.1). Facing the crowd streaming into the congress hall, a young man welcomes two women clad in dark dresses that read '*sebakritika* from above' and '*kritika* from below': 'Please come in, you two can enter without invitations!'⁴



„JEN POJĎTE – VY DVĚ SEM MŮŽETE I BEZ DELEGAČENKY!“

Figure 6.1 ‘Please come in...’ (source: Perneš 2003:102).

As in the Soviet past, in the Czechoslovak present *kritika* from ‘below’ and *sebakritika* from ‘above’ were especially encouraged; the goal was to counteract the opposite vectors: *kritika* from an elite directed ‘down’ and *sebakritika* encouraged or forced from ‘below’. To the degree that the latter set of vectors bore out in reality, it reflected an apparently widespread metalingual belief that it was hazardous to be the author of *kritika* ‘from above’ and *sebakritika* ‘from below’. Yurchak’s study (2006) also alludes to these risks. One informant related how members of a library committee who personally disliked a young instructor of Latin ganged

up on him during a meeting; to justify getting rid of him, they denounced him as a ‘traitor of the motherland’ (ibid.: 112–113). Nowhere does Yurchak mention an act of *kritika* by name; but the dynamic he describes resembles accounts of anxiety over voice and address in the former Czechoslovakia. Let me elaborate.

During Czechoslovakia’s period of political liberalization in the 1960s, young playwright Václav Havel claimed in an essay that:

There was a time when [*kritika*] was inseparable from power and it had an impact on power relations. This meant that, often, decent people did not criticize something they did not like so as not to bring harm to other people, and cowards often criticized things they did like so as not to bring harm to themselves. This time is long past, yet many ... are still willing to characterize every attempt at open [*kritika*] as naked terrorism, and every clear opinion as the new face of dogmatism. Thus writers who have become used to praise because they are against dogmatism become, the moment they are subjected to [*kritika*], convinced that they are the victims of a witch-hunt, character assassination, a terrorist plot, and born-again dogmatism.

(Havel 1991: 10–24)

Havel claimed that *kritika* had become an instrument of intimidation, disenfranchisement, and consolidation of power: the opposite of its textbook aims. He asserted that his peers perceived the significance of *kritika* less in *what* a speaker said, or in whether it represented a sincere effort to improve socialism (as the theory stipulated), and more in its context-specific parameters: which actor(s) did it target and what kind of unforeseen effects might it entail? In other words, Havel emphasized the power of the genre’s intertextuality and the metalinguistic interpretations it occasioned (e.g. the anxious perception that a discursive event of this kind spelled danger).

Most readers will surely be aware of the ways that *kritika* and *samokritika* served a politics of political liquidation in the early years of building socialism, both in the Soviet Union and in East Central Europe. During the purges, the press made the discursive practice of *kritika*, previously confined to Party circles, into a public event. Its audience expanded greatly, and the stakes of denunciation or rebuke were raised accordingly. In the press, attacks on those who (might have) betrayed the Party or state were presented as pious acts of *kritika*. These were performances of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ that deflected attention from the inner flaws of the Party, while also making the self into an exhibit piece of the Party’s vanguard role (see also Glaeser 2011; Kharkhordin 1999). A properly trained Communist was supposed to willingly measure him- or herself against the standards of the collective and welcome criticism from it, even if the motives behind this criticism were individual malice or someone’s desire to show off political activism.⁵ Ultimately, *kritika* and *sebakritika* became part of publicly broadcast court proceedings in the late 1940s to early 1950s, which often ended with convictions for crimes against the state and Czechoslovak people, followed by sentences of imprisonment or in some cases, death.

The register of *kritika* to which Havel alluded, with its social entailments, diverges from the encouraging and measured principles governing textbook *kritika*. The moral engine of these acts was outrage, whose goal was to silence, rather than desire to kindle constructive dialogue. This mode of harsh and authoritative *kritika* is what I refer to as ‘censure’. A distinct feature of it is the implied audience: here *kritika* is extended from the relatively ‘private’ and contained context of Party meetings to the most public arena of the national media, in which the targeted person becomes an object of gossip and scandal.

Censure and rebuke: outrage, anger and the tale of Pavol Števček

The emergence of this different register of *kritika*, and the kinds of heightened stakes for *sebakritika* that it portended, show the heterogeneity and instability *within* Party discourse in a light different from that of Yurchak’s ‘performative shift’. It also points to a mechanism of intertextuality (or metalingual understanding) in which one discursive event references another, making the ability to identify and interpret an act of *kritika* in terms of its textual precedents a true political-hermeneutic skill. So what specifically fostered the allegedly widespread understanding of *kritika* as, in Havel’s words, ‘a witch-hunt, character assassination, a terrorist plot, and born-again dogmatism?’ We have learned that it had something to do with intertextuality, address and instability in the genre itself (for example, its appearance in more than one register). To provide a more detailed answer to the question, I now turn to the example of a prominent Slovak intellectual of the late 1960s, Pavol Števček, and the workings of voice and emotion in public acts of *kritika* directed against him.

The political liberalization of the 1960s, which brought a loosening of the bond between Party discourse and public speech, culminated in the Prague Spring of 1968 and was dramatically curtailed following the invasion of Warsaw Pact forces in August 1968. The invasion did not end liberalization; rather, it initiated symbolically a process in which the conservative wing of the KSČ replaced numerous members of its Central Committee with more politically reliable cadres, and slowly set out to snuff challenges to the KSČ’s position as the ‘leading force’ in society. It targeted public personae – communist and non-communist alike – such as those who had taken critical positions on the Party leadership during liberalization or after the invasion. It sought to discredit those persons, or force to recant through the exertion of psychological pressure.

Before the Warsaw Pact invasion, literary critic Pavol Števček had been among the Slovak Party intellectuals who pushed for liberalization in the arts and politics. The last column Števček wrote before he disappeared from public was published in the July 1969 issue of *Slovenské pohľady* [Slovak Views] (Števček 1969). Nearly a year after the Warsaw Pact invasion, Števček upbraided recent contributors to the Bratislava edition of the daily *Pravda* for their dogmatic interpretations of the ‘Party line’. He called their section of the paper a

barometer for the political direction of the country, praised the thoughtfulness of one set of contributors, but then added:

Different times are flashing when the lightning is from the pens (or typewriters) of Bohuš Trávniček, Ján Podhradský, and Karol Hulman.... They are recognizable with certainty by their custom of quoting from [Party] speeches: they want to armor themselves with authority, with the truth of power. And they want to be in line. Always in line.

He continued:

According to how, what, and against whom they write today, with their open journalistic brazenness and poorly concealed rage, we cannot await much good: days of vengeance, times of retribution await us.... Cynically they laugh about that which made the nation cry just months earlier.

Števček concluded:

I never lost the conviction that the Party and socialism will always be deserving of more dignified, morally qualified defenders and protagonists. That's why ... a fear is following me that something deeply grave must have happened to the Party and socialism, when the present seems to belong to those who are the most obedient and the most inflexible regarding everything.

Števček's attack was based on at least three metalinguistic challenges: to acts of incorporating reported speech uncritically into one's own; to inappropriate affect in these critics' writing; and to the moral standing of those who spoke on behalf of the Party. The reply came from several sources. The respondents invoked both the textbook and censure registers of *kritika* as they carefully manipulated their voices (and performance of emotion) in relation to that of the KSČ leadership. Evoking the spirit of *kritika* 'from below' was essential to this productive ambiguity. Another crucial element was these texts' use of reported discourse. Reported discourse can draw out and emphasize certain forms of sentiment by how it represents another interlocutor's affective state (Besnier 1993) or deflects accusations of inappropriate emotion in one's own speech (Irvine 1993). As we shall see presently, the re-entextualization of sentiments in these attacks enhanced their double-voiced threatening innuendo.

Within a month, two of the columnists chastised by Števček responded in *Pravda*: Bohuš Trávniček on 21 August with a column, 'With whom are you going, Pavol Števček?' and Ján Podhradský two days later with: 'Where is Pavol Števček headed?' The titles evoked the register of 'textbook *kritika*' that I described earlier, or a devoted Communist's moral advice to a wayward colleague (or comrade) intended to be objective, hold the colleague accountable and suggest a solution. Trávniček declared that he was proud to write in the spirit of

the Party, as it was the KSČ that had recognized the country's drift off course leading up to the Warsaw Pact invasion. He denounced Števček for writing with base motivations of 'wrath, bile, and hate'. Remaining 'in the line' of the Party (Števček's words) was for Trávníček a matter of honour, whereas – he flipped the accusation – it seemed to 'make Števček's eyes roll [*to Števčekovi kole oči*]'. In conclusion, he quoted the new president, Gustav Husák, and proceeded to ask threateningly: 'Does [Števček] want to hold the line of the congress that voted for him, or not? Decisions apply to all, and even he will not be an exception' (Trávníček 1969).

In his turn, Podhradský responded to Števček's charge of a lack of independence:

Aha, liberated publicist. How he is completely independent. He actually knew everything before birth or in the cradle..., did not learn anything from anyone, did not inherit reason from anyone, he – independent publicist – reaches with his reason far beyond Lenin, Marx, Hegel, Spinoza, Aristotle, and Heraclites. They were actually a mistake in human development.

(Podhradský 1969a)

He attacked Števček for deviating naïvely from historical truths established by a strong tradition of dialectical thought. Podhradský aligned his position not only within the philosophical trajectory of the KSČ up to the current leadership. Following Trávníček's lead, he turned the matter into a moral issue:

[O]f course I referred to Piller, Štrougal, Lenárt and others. I quoted them to raise the militancy, partisanship (which makes Števček's eyes roll), and engagement of my lines, and therefore I am not ashamed of how I cited them. I quoted them at a time when these politicians were caught in the fire of right-wing snipers...

(Ibid.)

By the end of the piece Podhradský sought to bury Števček alongside Alexander Dubček's policies of 'socialism with a human face':

A human face can mean anything – the face of a child, mother, criminal, liar, or conspirator. So help us God that we could have plain and simple socialism, but for people who deserve it, not with those and for those who have lost their human face.

(Ibid.)

By October, the Party expelled Števček, and the Union of Slovak Writers (ZSS) revoked his membership, effectively banning him from access to publishing. Podhradský added a half-page detailed account of Števček's loss of 'self-critical' abilities in the 4 November issue of *Pravda*: 'Inexorable critic and judge Pavol Števček: Naked negativism does not believe in a positive goal' (Podhradský

1969b). Embedded in these attacks were two of the registers I described earlier: textbook *kritika* and censure. As I noted, the authors framed their texts as moral, altruistic advice to a wayward comrade. Yet they also denounced Števček rather vehemently for his political positions, exposing him before a judging audience and, by so doing, mobilizing this audience. Števček was not simply removed from his position by someone higher up: a public case was made that he had failed the Party in its role as vanguard of the nation.

The authors' re-contextualizations of Števček's original critique infused their texts with outrage and mockery. The arrow of accusation, originally directed at *their* ill-tempered writing was now pointed back in Števček's direction. Trávniček and Podhradský presented Števček's practice of *kritika* as illegitimate, berating him as an 'inexorable critic', 'naked negativist', and writer possessed by 'wrath, bile, and hate'. They also deployed verbal images of the face, the part of the human body most evocative of emotion. Trávniček was painting a verbal image of juvenile impatience when he wrote that while he would want to be 'in line' with the Party, the thought 'makes Števček's eyes roll'. Podhradský repeated this image (along with Trávniček's other accusations), perhaps seeking to corroborate the case for Števček's immaturity. This second columnist closed his riposte by accusing Števček of having lost his 'human face'. The allusion to 'human face' once again links Števček to the now-mocked slogans of the reformist period.

These authors directed their outrage and sarcasm towards segments of Števček's text in which he had questioned the wisdom of 'always being in line' with the Party. Podhradský ridiculed the reckless *naïveté* of Števček ('Aha, liberated publicist!'), who wished to step out of line, believing that he should speak without the intertextual wisdom of others. 'Liberated' individualism would lead good Communists astray from the dialectical 'line' of reasoning issued from Lenin, Marx, Hegel, Spinoza, Aristotle and Heraclites. The Party's moral order that descended from this philosophical tradition delimited the ends of 'objective, disinterested, and constructive' textbook *kritika*.

The identifiability of Števček's critics – Trávniček and Podhradský – seems to matter here for the deployment of emotion against him. Someone within the KSČ or the print media saw fit for a pair of columnists to respond to Števček, rather than simply pressure a network of editors to blacklist him. The timing of the first anniversary of the Warsaw Pact invasion suggests that the editors of *Pravda* wanted to treat Števček's accusations as representative of more widely circulating claims. However, the editors could have done this without printing a name underneath each attack: it was not uncommon for print media of the era to omit the name of a text's author. The inclusion of names (leaving aside the question of whether the attributed columnists actually authored these pieces) personalizes the counter-arguments against Števček, suggesting the spontaneous outburst of offended citizens defending a moral order, a kind of textbook *kritika* from 'below'. Throughout the period, names appeared at the end of similar personal attacks, apparently even in cases when it was unclear if the named person actually existed. This fact reflects a metalingual understanding that

Party-regulated public discourse was supposed to incorporate voices other than just those of leading members of the KSČ (*kritika* 'from above'). Moreover, perhaps it was inappropriate for the leadership of the benign and benevolent Party, face of what was supposed to be an enlightened state, to assume a belligerent tone towards some of its subjects. Having other actors, such as lower-ranking writers, carry out the attack deflected responsibility from the top.⁶

The Party, of course, could not be fully exempt from the proceedings. Trávníček and Podhradský both quoted from recent statements at Party meetings by the new Czechoslovak president, Gustav Husák. Simultaneously, they were endeavouring to defend themselves from Števček's attacks. These men aimed very explicitly to *not* be seen as the sole generators of their own texts; to that end, they 'cloaked themselves' in the rhetoric of the KSČ leadership. Trávníček, for instance, closed his piece by apparently quoting Husák's speech at a spring plenum of the Central Committee, that '[Party] resolutions apply to all, and even he [Števček] won't be an exception'. Were these columnists, then, serving simply as animators for other more powerful authors of censuring *kritika*? The ambiguity might have offered cover to the leadership of the KSČ. Yet as Števček had noted, the tone of these columnists invoked *kritika* of the 1950s that had been used to silence and intimidate. Števček's critics were hailing him as an enemy of the people and of the state, a token that presupposed knowledge of how predecessors of his type had been made.

In these attacks on Pavol Števček, a significant portion of the 'meaning' was created through heteroglossically structured ambiguity, rather than through the semantic and syntactic structure of argument. We see that 'the' Party discourse directed against Števček consisted of the unstable genre of *kritika* and the histories, voices and emotions that haunted it. This picture is not one of an individual against a coherent system, but of discourse made by and making, unmade by and unmaking, the subjects participating in it.

Conclusion: this history of *kritika* and social analysis of Communist dialectics

This chapter has reviewed important features of a few major analyses of Communist discourse to date and introduced a perspective from linguistic anthropology through the case study of formal *kritika* in Party and public discourse in the former Czechoslovakia. I have argued that attention to the enregistered, intertextual, heteroglossic and performative character of *kritika* in its forms of address suggests the complex ways in which emotion informs the languages of state socialism. It also opens up broader questions about how we think about Communist discourse as a 'system' in relation to socialist subjectivities. To conclude, let me offer a few thoughts for future inquiries.

First, rather than approach socialist language as a singular phenomenon, we would be wise to attend to the heterogeneity within it. We might start, as Yurchak's recent book does, and as I have attempted to do here, with describing (national) Party ideals and then look to the pre-existing, emergent and

consequent genres, styles and registers that flourished because, despite or in isolation from discursive patterns influenced by the Party. If understandings of Communist discourse to date have relied on homogenizing and essentializing notions such as ‘the language of wood’, our quest for a richer understanding of it lies exactly in an exploration of its heteroglossia and heterogeneity.

Second, as sociologist Andreas Glaeser has done in his recent work, I would urge closer attention to genres and registers of Party and official discourse. Work on Party and official discourse would benefit from thinking both more narrowly about the specifics of interactions and more widely about the forms that pattern variation. For instance, how was it that in Late Socialist Czechoslovakia daily newspapers such as *Pravda* renewed patterns akin to Yurchak’s description of ideologically heavy authoritative discourse and its performative shift (reminiscent of the 1950s), while novels and films generally evolved in a different direction (away from explicit ideologically references)? How were these two divergent forms of ‘Party discourse’ related, if at all?

Third, and finally, this chapter may serve as a caution on how we think of the relationship between language and thought during the period. As my earlier survey of work on public discourse regimented by the Party showed, many studies of such phenomena have treated them as a means to understand thought and the relationship of subjects to the state. However, if discursive forms such as *kritika* were subject to co-optation, drift or influence from genres ‘outside’ Party control, what does that mean for the Party’s alleged influence on thought? It is necessary to engage further and more deeply with the histories of a genre such as *kritika* and to study the influence of its features on social relations in time and space. This kind of research leads us to map contours of the social terrain less explored by studies of Party discourse to date, such as the perhaps unexpected presence of emotion in the ‘wooden’ dialectics of Communist language.

Notes

- 1 Yurchak also avoids the longer historical influence of dialectical thinking, something to which Glaeser gives a central place in his account of the region’s socialist vernaculars (see also Boyer 2005). This shows us how the histories of Communist discourse can vary by local context and cautions us on how to theorize it across the region. For instance, historian Zdeněk David (2005) has pointed out that nineteenth-century Slovak intellectuals were exposed to and influenced by dialectical thought at Prussian universities, but Czech intellectuals were less so because of the alternative influence of the Austrian Catholic Enlightenment. Thus, identifying origins of Communist rhetoric in nineteenth-century German dialectical thought might shed light on Communist discourse in Russia, Germany and Slovakia, but be less illuminating for other parts of the region.
- 2 As quoted also in an early post-socialist secondary school textbook (Ihnátková *et al.* 1994). Several former Party members I have interviewed have suggested that the reproduction of this slogan was the extent of official guidelines as to how the genres should have been practised; the issue certainly demands further study.
- 3 For a published account, see Glaeser (2011, esp. 284–285).
- 4 See further reference to the campaign before the congress in Barnovský (2002).
- 5 See Hellbeck (2006), Tatarka (1963) and, of course, Koestler (1968).

- 6 Fitzpatrick has suggested that sarcasm and smugness were two prime characteristics of Soviet styles of debating ideological matters (1999). Some of these features may have travelled to Slovakia, already been there, or developed on their own. She also notes Soviet efforts to maintain an image of Stalin as a 'benevolent Tsar', not always responsible for the actions of his 'boyars'.

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7 ‘Birdwatchers of the world, unite!’

The language of Soviet ideology in translation

Samantha Sherry

In her memoir, the translator Nora Gal’ recounts a curious event from her time working at the journal *Internatsional’naia literatura* [*International Literature*]:¹

It was here that I first saw Natal’ia Al’bertovna Volzhina.² At *Interlit*, we had previously been engrossed in her translation of *The Grapes of Wrath*. Now we had another of Steinbeck’s novels, *The Moon is Down*, about the fascist invasion and the proud resistance of a small, peaceful, but freedom-loving people. Everyone sitting in or coming into the room was discussing *The Moon is Down*: the ‘prosaists’, the ‘poets’, the ‘critics’ and, I remember, the technical editors as well. There was a stumbling block – a character called *The Leader*. Today, with no worry or care for the Russian language, we see all kinds of *ленчи* [lunches], *брифинги* [briefings], *офисы* [offices], and *презентации* [presentations]. But at that time, no one wanted to introduce the foreign word *лидер* [leader] into literary prose. The whole room considered the question and made suggestions. *Вождь* [chief, leader] especially with a capital, could not even be considered. *Вожак* [guide]? *Вожатый* [leader]? Not with that semantic overlay. And suddenly I squeaked shyly from behind my desk, ‘Could we not use *Предводитель* [leader, head]?’ Vera Maksimovna looked over her glasses at me.³ I will never forget that kind and humorous look. [...] *The Moon is Down* never appeared in *Interlit*. We did not yet know, when we were preparing the spring issues, that from 1943 the journal would no longer exist.

(Gal’ 1997: 59)

Gal’s recounting of this event encapsulates a particular kind of linguistic anxiety typical of the Soviet period, and markedly present in translation. The editorial board and translators at the journal faced two related problems: the first was the undesirability of employing the foreignism ‘*лидер*’. The second problem concerns the lack of a suitable semantically equivalent term not linked to the ‘the charismatic and sacral *vozhd*’ (Plamper 2012: 35); the term had a particularly strong connotative meaning associated with Stalin and his cult. Neither ‘*вожак*’ nor ‘*вожатый*’ could be acceptable alternatives, containing as they did the same root as ‘*вождь*’. Gal’s own timid suggestion, ‘*предводитель*’, although

arguably a clumsy choice for a character's name, manages to capture the meaning of 'leader' while avoiding the ideologically sensitive association with Stalin, and could, therefore, have been a more suitable alternative.

This distinctive Soviet concern for the ideological and symbolic potential of language will be the subject of this chapter, which will examine the translation of ideologically loaded language in two major literary journals, *Internatsional'naiia literatura* and its successor, *Inostrannaia literatura* [*Foreign Literature*]. The particular difficulty faced by the translators and editors is determined by the importance, or "magical" power, of the word in Soviet discourse (Humphrey 2005: 377) and the ideological divide between Western and Soviet culture, a gap foregrounded by the act of translation. Because the transfer of texts into new cultural, linguistic and ideological contexts can produce meanings in the target culture that do not exist for the readers of the source text, the translated text is, in effect, a new text, functioning in culturally specific ways in its new context; as Jacques Derrida puts it, 'translation is neither an image nor a copy' (2002: 115). The translated text's in-between status creates polysemy, as it simultaneously looks back to the source culture and forward to the target culture. Translations are, thus, fundamentally intertextual, 'bringing texts together in a play of multiple meanings and the pluralities of language' (Bassnett 1996: 11), since 'any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another' (Kristeva 1986: 37). Translations are outgrowths of the original text, functioning differently in the target culture; this fact makes translation an interpretative process 'capable of qualitative jumps in knowledge and perception, of amplifying the semantic polyvalency of discourse, of opening new ideological horizons' (Petrilli 1992: 239). It is precisely this play of multiple meanings, and the potential for new and unregulated meanings to appear, that provoked anxiety for the producers of Soviet translations, since theirs was a culture that treated certain terms as quasi-sacred. In the course of this chapter, I will examine the response to particular ideologically significant signs through censorial translation processes, highlighting the means by which, 'the ruling class strives to impart a supraclass, eternal character to the ideological sign, to extinguish or drive inward the struggle between social value judgements which occurs in it, to make the sign uniaccental' (Voloshinov 1986: 23).

The following analysis focuses on the censorship exercised in the translation of ideologemes. The term 'ideologeme' (sometimes rendered as 'ideologem') has been used with several different meanings in studies of language and discourse, but always with a reference to ideology. Bakhtin (1981: 333) acknowledges the ideological nature of language in the novel thus:

The speaking person in the novel is always, to one degree or another, an *ideologue*, and his [*sic*] words are always *ideologemes*. A particular language in a novel is always a particular way of viewing the world, one that strives for a social significance. It is precisely as ideologemes that discourse becomes the object of representation in the novel, and it is for the same reason novels are never in danger of becoming a mere aimless verbal play.

Gasán Guseinov defines the ideologeme as

[T]he smallest part of a text or flow of discourse, subject or symbol, which is perceived by the author, the listener, the reader as a reference – direct or indirect – to a metalanguage or to an imaginary code of philosophical norms and fundamental ideological constructions, which control society [...]. It is possible to define the ideologeme as the simplest switch from the natural – personal to the official – public regime of linguistic behaviour and vice versa.

(2004: 27)

An ideologeme, then, is a discursive item – a letter, word or other textual unit – that contains a reference to ideology or cultural norms. In Soviet culture, ideologemes are strongly linked to the performative, ritualistic nature of official discourse (on this topic, see Bogdanov 2009); the study of these key symbolic items of Soviet culture, whether called tropes, symbols, icons or 'hieroglyphics' (Condee 1995), is well established (see, for example, Fel'dman 2006; Figes and Kolonitskii 2009). Ideologemes are taken to be semantically stable and, crucially, unquestioned: their meaning is understood by language users as commonsensical. As a result, ideologemes can direct language users towards authoritative and canonized meanings; in essence, they can function as signals of ideological orthodoxy.

In the examples analysed here, translators, editors or censors, suspicious of the possibility for new meanings to arise in translated foreign texts, worked to reduce ambiguity and fix canonical meanings by erasing ideologically foreign uses of Soviet ideologemes. The fixing of meaning could be brought about by the activity of discursive producers who, through the reproduction and repetition of discourse, emphasized certain sanctioned meanings while cutting off other meanings (Ryazanova-Clarke 2009: 300). Malte Rolf notes this tendency to make certain terms sacred as a part of the process of an 'inner Sovietization' of discourse:

[Stalinist culture] fostered a canon of untouchable symbols and vocabularies. Extra-canonical references were likely to become targets of harsh criticism. By contrast, labels like 'revolutionary', 'proletarian', and 'Soviet' and seemingly core symbols like the Red star and Red flag could not possibly be criticized.

(2009: 626)

The clash between the destabilizing effect of translation and the presence of a set of significant and powerful words and symbols posed a challenge to the ideologized linguistic canon. Faced with this challenge, Soviet translators and editors adopted a censorial approach that sought to mitigate the possible ideological hazards.

The journals *Internatsional'naiia literatura* and *Inostrannaia literatura*

This study draws upon a range of fiction, memoir and reportage texts translated from English and published in the monthly literary journals *Internatsional'naiia*

literatura and its successor *Inostrannaia literatura*. *Internatsional'naia literatura* was funded and published by the International Association of Revolutionary Writers [*Mezhdunarodnoe ob"edinenie revoliutsionnykh pisatelei*, MORP] from 1933 until its closure in 1943. By virtue of being the major journal of the era devoted to contemporary Western literature, it was Soviet readers' primary means of access to foreign literature and information about other cultures. Although largely dedicated to translating so-called 'progressive' authors, it had substantial freedom in selecting texts for publication. This was especially true of the first half of the 1930s, when even 'hostile' bourgeois authors could find their way onto its pages.⁴ A prominent example is James Joyce, whose 'formalist' *Ulysses* was published in *Internatsional'naia literatura* in 1935/1936, albeit in truncated form.⁵ The journal came under increasing political pressure in the second half of the 1930s, and many members of the editorial board fell victim to the purges. It was finally closed by the Politburo in 1943. More than a decade was to pass before another journal dedicated to foreign literature in translation appeared in the Soviet Union. Established after the second congress of the Writers' Union in 1955, *Inostrannaia literatura* set itself the task of publishing 'the works of the best writers who, with their works, struggle for peace and socialism and also those who, although they stand outside this struggle, depict their society correctly' (Chakovskii 1955). As well as now obscure communist authors, *Inostrannaia literatura* published works by J.D. Salinger, Franz Kafka and Ernest Hemingway. Both journals played a cardinal role in introducing readers to cultural worlds beyond the Soviet borders.

Translating ideologemes in *Internatsional'naia literatura*

My earliest example of censorial translation in the Stalin-era journal is drawn from William Rollins Jr's novel, *The Shadow Before* (1934, Russian publication the same year), which makes reference to the trial of the Italian-American radicals Sacco and Vanzetti, a cause célèbre in the Soviet Union.⁶ The changes introduced in translation centre on the politically charged term *anarchist*. In the original version, a journalist reports the words of the judge in the case as follows: 'No snarling Thayer, after "those anarchist bastards"' (Rollins, W. 1934: 307). The Russian text excises the politically charged term *anarchist* and substitutes the more evocative adjective 'snarling' for *циник* [cynic]. The end result is: *Эмо вам не циник Тэйер* (Rollins, U. 1934: 14).⁷ In the Soviet cultural context, *anarchist* is an ideologeme with a strong resonance and well-defined set of meanings, issuing from a particular historical and political development. These meanings are exclusively negative, antinomic with the ideology in power. Thus the major dictionary of the Russian language edited by Dmitrii Ushakov (1935) defines *анархизм* [anarchism] as a

petty bourgeois political movement, opposed to Marxist–Leninist teachings about the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat [...] a counter-revolutionary force fighting against the Soviet Union and betraying the revolutionary struggle of the working class of the capitalist countries.

The censorial reaction, therefore, can be explained by the gap between the connotative meanings of the ideologeme *anarchist* in the Soviet and Western cultures. While in Western contexts Sacco and Vanzetti were, and continue to be, commonly referred to as 'anarchists', in Soviet rhetoric they appeared consistently as 'communists'.⁸ The translation just considered represents a type of manipulation that Mikhail Epstein (1991: 23) has described as an 'evaluative conversion, changing the connotative meaning while retaining the denotative meaning'. The same kind of incongruence between ideological meanings and connotations in the Western and Soviet contexts characterizes all other examples of translation discussed in this chapter.

The following extract is taken from Jim Phelan's novel *Green Volcano* (1938), which *Internatsional'naiia literatura* translated in 1940. It tells the story of a group of Irish revolutionaries on the run from the authorities. Political sympathy for Irish republicanism was, most likely, the reason why this particular text was chosen for translation by the Soviet editors.⁹ A line of a song sung by the rebels offers yet another example of a manipulation whose goal is to purge negative connotations from politically positive characters:

For though they sleep in dungeons deep,
Or flee an outlaw band,
We love them yet,
We can't forget,
The *felons* of our land

(Phelan 1938: 110)

While the song's original is clearly sarcastic, relying upon the reader's understanding of the discrepancy between the official perception of these 'felons' and the attitude of their supporters, the translated version seeks to eschew this complexity and enforce an unambiguous meaning.¹⁰

Пускай иных уж нет в живых,
Иные скитаться должны
Мы любим вас и помним вас,
Ирландии сыны

(Felan 1940: 35)¹¹

The intervention here consists of the replacement of the source text's negatively oriented term with one that has decisively positive connotations in the target culture. Ushakov's dictionary (1935) offers the following slogans to illustrate its definition of *сын* [son]: 'I, the *son* of the working people', and 'Long live the Soviet pilots, courageous *sons* of our great motherland!' This is in stark contrast to the word *преступник*, the standard Russian equivalent of *felon*. The semantics of a 'socially dangerous' element does not allow any association with revolutionaries or revolution. Clearly, an ideological anxiety is at work here concerning the disparity between the authoritative meanings triggered by the

target discourse and those active in the source discourse. The manipulative translation guards against unauthorized construction of meaning, so that the reader does not interpret these revolutionaries literally as felons. This is an instance of pre-emptive interpretation on the reader's behalf by the text producers, which wards off ambiguity by erasing the sense of irony present in the original.

The reorientation of ideologemes in translation could also involve the replacement of an ideologically marked item with a neutral one, as is demonstrated in John Hyde Preston's *The Liberals* (1938, published in Russian in the same year). In this novel, the main character, Greg, a socialist, is described as follows: 'That sleepy communist, he wants the revolution tomorrow. He can't wait' (Preston, J.H. 1938a: 308). In the Russian version, the word 'communist' was replaced by the more neutral *герой* [hero]: '*Вот этот сонный герой хочет, чтоб революция была завтра. Он не может ждать*' (Preston, D.Kh. 1938a: 90).¹² Here, the Russian word *коммунист* [communist] could simply not be used in the gently ironic collocation deployed in the English version. The replacement by *герой* allows irony to be retained at the price of de-ideologizing the term in question.

An ideologeme need not only be a single word; it may also be a larger unit such as a metaphorical construction or slogan; larger textual units of this kind were a source of particular anxiety during the translation process. Just such an example can be observed in the translation of Hemingway's *Fiesta* (better known in English as *The Sun Also Rises*). Interestingly, Nora Gal' wrote in her memoirs (1997) that in Vera Maksimovna Toper's translation 'nothing was simplified, there were no insertions of her own words (*отсебятина*); the real Hemingway was truly recreated in Russian', even as the translated text shows traces of multiple manipulations. The following is a description of a street procession in Pamplona, as witnessed by the novel's American protagonists. The passage is significantly shortened in the Russian translation:

Down the street came dancers. The street was solid with dancers, all men. They were all dancing in time behind their own fifers and drummers. They were a club of some sort, and all wore workmen's blue smocks, and red handkerchiefs around their necks, and carried a great banner on two poles. The banner danced up and down with them as they came down surrounded by the crowd.

'Hurray for Wine! Hurray for the Foreigners!' was painted on the banner.

'Where are the foreigners?' Robert Cohn asked.

'We're the foreigners', Bill said.

(Hemingway 1927: 177)

The translated version cuts much of the most vivid descriptive material: '*Вся улица сплошь была запружена танцовщиками – одни мужчины. Они все танцевали под свой собственный оркестр из дудок и барабанов*' (Kheminguëi 1935: 17).¹³ Hemingway's imagery is quite clear: the picture of a group of workers of some kind is emphasized by the presence of the workers'

smock and red kerchiefs; the banner on two poles could imply political activism. An ideologically alert reading of the passage could discern two symbols in this humorous sketch – the worker and the revolution – that were sacred in Soviet culture; while it was acceptable to play with these items in a humorous fashion in the American context, this was impossible in the Soviet one because of their highly ideologized status. The revolution was, of course, the founding myth of the Soviet state, whose sacred role requires no elaboration. These items held a foundational place in the symbolic economy of the Soviet Union and, as such, could not be satirized (at least in the official sphere of cultural production). In a Soviet context, the comical image of the workers' carnival procession could be misconstrued as containing a satire on the revolution and its associated parades and demonstrations, or as mocking the sacred figure of the worker. As a result, the passage is rewritten to pre-empt any potential misreading. The reference to 'workmen' is removed, and the banner, so evocative of Soviet official culture, also disappears in the Russian version.

Another example of the manipulation of the ideologically sacralized term *worker* is taken from Joseph Freeman's *An American Testament* (1936, Russian publication 1937). In one place, Freeman presents a communist newspaper report on the plight of American workers: 'There will be another fierce, dreadful wave of unemployment, another American famine. I am no divinely-informed prophet who says that; *any American workingman* will give you the same information' (Freeman 1936: 238). The Russian version manipulates certain key terms: '*Мы увидим новую гигантскую волну безработицы, новый американский голод. Не думайте, что это вещает пророк. Наш великий американский рабочий скажет вам то же самое*' (Friman 1937a: 182).¹⁴ The change here involves a strengthening of the term 'workingman', with the result that the text is made to align more closely with Soviet rhetorical norms. The addition of the adjective *великий* [great] creates a collocation strongly reminiscent of official Stalinist language, calling to mind proclamations, slogans and newspaper headlines.

In narratives sympathetic to the communist cause (that is, the majority of the texts published in *Internatsional'naia literatura*), one can observe repeated instances of translation that opt for Soviet ideological language over faithfulness to the original idiom. In Robert Briffault's polemical *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (1938, published in *Internatsional'naia literatura* in 1939), we find the following sentence on the cotton industry in Lancashire: 'Thousands of *operatives* are out of work with no prospect of ever being able to return to the mill.' (1938: 17). This is translated as: '*Тысячи рабочих выбрасываются на улицу без всякой надежды когда-либо вновь вернуться на фабрики*' (Briffo 1939: 158).¹⁵ The Russian phrase *выбрасываются на улицу* [they are thrown out onto the street] is a newspaper cliché, whose use in the translated text creates a palpable effect of intertextuality. It echoes the tone of typical Soviet criticism of the West, which often focused on economic problems and the predatory treatment of workers.¹⁶ The use of an instantly recognizable phrase inserts Briffault's text into the already existing pattern of Soviet public discourse on the West.

A further subtle manipulation of Briffault's text substitutes a term associated with Soviet political discourse. Where Briffault states, 'For in no instance is a whole nation so effectually and uniformly conditioned in subservience to ruling interests as is the mind of England' (1938: 254), the Russian translation replaces this with '*Ибо ни в одном случае весь народ не показал себя в такой степени подчиненным правящим классам, как в Англии*' (Briffault 1939: 202).¹⁷ This formulation draws upon the vocabulary of Marxist ideology, thus aligning Briffault's text more explicitly with Soviet political discourse, creating an inter-textual link that was more or less absent from the original. In *The Liberals*, a similar insertion of Soviet ideologemes into the text also occurs in the translation of the name of a building development as *рабочий городок* (workers' town) (Preston, D.Kh. 1938a: 88), whereas the English has the neutral 'River Settlement' (Preston, J.H. 1938: 302).

It was common for censorial translation to be employed in order to align the foreign texts with the Soviet discursive canon. The following example comes from *An American Testament*. The English reads: 'We live once; let us not live like rats burrowing in some little hole, but like wise and courageous men and women who *conquer some part of nature in their own generation*' (Freeman 1936: 377). The Russian translation runs as follows: '*Мы живем только раз, давайте же жить не как крысы, зарывшиеся в нору, а как мудрые и мужественные люди, которые выбрали себе какой-то вид борьбы*' (Friman 1937b: 171).¹⁸ In this extract the final part of the sentence is shortened and replaced by the word '*борьба*' [struggle] that had a strong resonance in Soviet culture, being associated with revolutionary activities and the building of the Soviet state. The metaphor of struggle was a central one in Soviet discourse, and the word *борьба* figures in such pivotal discursive items like the class struggle (*классовая борьба*), the struggle against the enemies of the people ('*борьба с врагами народа*') and the concept of the task (*задача*), central to Stalinist projects (Brooks 2000: 296).

Another vital sign in Soviet culture was the colour *red*, the colour of the revolution. Maurice Friedberg (1989: 27) notes the omission of 'the Red Baron and also [...] Red label Whiskey' in a translation of Neil Simon's play *The Prisoner of Second Avenue* (1971), 'because these sounded like slurs on the communist movement'. Translations published in *Internatsional'naiia* and *Inostrannaia literatura* contain several instances of similar changes, each indicating the key status of this ideologeme in Soviet culture. In the following example, drawn from *The Liberals*, a statement made by the reactionary character, Will, was altered in the translation to remove the ideologeme *red*: Where the English version has 'It was all that damned Obilitch and Greg. They were a couple of *red* shits' (Preston, J.H. 1938: 166), the Russian is rendered '*Это все Грег и эта скотина Обилич*' (Preston, D.Kh. 1938b: 40).¹⁹

The second sentence of the English text does not survive in the Russian translation. Here, although there clearly is a more overt political motive – avoiding the slander of communism – the main reason for the intervention is the inflammatory significance of the word *красный* [red] in Soviet culture; its use as an

item of insult in Soviet discourse was impossible. There is a further nuance in this novel concerning the use of 'red': in the American political context, the word signifies *republican* as well as *communist*. In a description of the Republican character, Fitzpatrick, as 'a bloated red in tweeds' (Preston, J.H. 1938: 32), the translated text avoids a negative use of the ideologeme, instead employing a word with no political connotations: *индюк* [turkey] (Preston, D.Kh. 1938b: 52). The culturally specific element disappears and the imagery is entirely altered. Once again, the difference in connotative meaning between the terms used in English and in Russian provoked an attempt to avoid an unauthorized interpretation or to allow the ideologeme to acquire a new, alternative meaning in the Soviet context. The Russian lexical choice remains striking in its imagery, which paints an extremely negative image of the Republican, even subtly conveying the visual image of the colour *red* in the turkey's characteristic colouring.

A similar, though somewhat less drastic, example of the censorial translation of *red* can be observed in Joseph Freeman's *An American Testament*. In the passage below, the author sarcastically quotes popular opinion on the economic development of the USA after the First World War. Since this is reported speech, it is clear that the statement is not the real opinion of the author; despite the clearly marked (not least, through the use of quotation marks) distance between speaker and what is being spoken, the Russian text endeavours to minimize the negative use of the word *красный* by avoiding its collocation with an insult. The English version reads: 'Yet even when the Golden Age was most golden, a lot of 'dirty Reds' were "disgruntled"' (Freeman 1936: 340). The Russian version cuts the insult: '*Но даже в самую золотую пору золотого века масса "красных" имела большие "неприятности"*' (Friman 1937b: 164–165).²⁰ Although *красный* is retained as a means of referring to the communists, an acceptable use according to the standards of Soviet discourse, the negative marker, 'dirty', is removed.

A further example from the successor journal, *Inostrannaia literatura*, demonstrates the same concern for the status of *red* in Soviet discourse. The term 'red vulture', used to refer to a corrupt and violent police chief in Graham Greene's *Our Man in Havana* (1958: 34), is rendered in the Russian text only as *стервятник* [vulture] (Grin 1959: 24). Since red was closely associated with the triumph of communism, the colour featured heavily in parades, posters and other officially produced symbolic products, its pairing with a negative character was felt as inappropriate.

Acting to control new potential connotative meanings being released in the target discourse, the translators and editors of these texts paid careful attention to the canonized items of Soviet discourse, those items having great cultural and ideological significance in the target context, but not in the source culture. The translation of ideological language was founded on a conception of certain parts of discourse as inviolable, able only to be employed in particular, limited ways; all these examples of censorial intervention share a concern with adhering to the norms of Soviet discourse, whether that means erasing heretical meanings, or inserting authorized meanings, thus creating intertextuality between the foreign

and Soviet discursive contexts. Jan Plamper (2001: 540) posits that an important mode of Stalinist censorship was aimed to guard against the circulation of multiple meanings and ‘reduce semantic ambiguity’. That this tendency is particularly marked in the treatment of translated literature is borne out by examination of these works, which clearly display the censorial attempt to limit and control the readers’ interpretation of the text. The next section of this chapter will show that similar patterns of censorial translation survived in the years following Stalin’s death, though they began to operate more ambiguously.

Translating ideologemes in *Inostrannaia literatura*

Despite the onset of the ‘Thaw’ in Soviet literature after Stalin’s death, the quasi-sacred nature of Soviet discourse did not change significantly, at least on a formal level. The canon of ideological language continued to be enforced, and cultural tropes and symbols of the Stalinist era lived on in its aftermath (Prokhorov 2002: 106–107). This was part of a larger trend that saw Stalinist cultural patterns covertly perpetuated even when they were overtly rejected. Kat-erina Clark, for instance, asserts that Thaw fiction, although often seen as a reaction against socialist-realist literature, ‘grew out of, rather than away from, the traditions that preceded it [...]’. Even when writers advocate values they believe to be opposed to Stalinist values, they often articulate them against the old patterns’ (Clark 1985: 236). The continued existence of certain Stalinist patterns of linguistic control is clearly present in the examples drawn from *Inostrannaia literatura*; this control continues to be exercised on the same ideologically loaded terms as in previous years. However, the results of censorial translation in this period are more ambiguous, and it becomes more difficult to ascribe clear and conscious motives to the interventions. In comparison to the texts published in *Internatsional’naia literatura*, slightly fewer examples of censorship are to be found in the successor journal. This is a somewhat surprising fact given that authoritative public discourse after the mid-1950s started to ‘experience progressive normalization’ (Yurchak 2006: 47), as authoritative meanings became increasingly fixed. Since public discourse became less variable, we might well expect that the attempt to create stable ideological meanings would survive and perhaps even be consolidated in the post-Stalin era. Notwithstanding the ossification of public discourse, the relative ideological flexibility granted to foreign literature might be seen a result of an increasingly sympathetic official attitude towards foreign literature and culture.

In comparison to the texts published in *Internatsional’naia literatura*, the approach taken in the post-Stalinist journal is somewhat subtler, employing more complex linguistic techniques than simple excision or substitution. This is best observed in an attempt to preserve the sanctioned meaning of the ideologeme ‘revolution’ in Mitchell Wilson’s *Meeting at a Far Meridian* (1961, published in the journal the same year).²¹ The section in question depicts the novel’s hero observing preparations for a parade on Red Square to mark the anniversary of the October Revolution. The original version states: ‘Every night, the rehearsal

became *less ragged and more complete*, with longer lines of military vehicles extending further up Gorki Street waiting for their dash into and across the Square past the silent Mausoleum' (Wilson 1961: 239). The Russian is subtly modified to read *'И каждую ночь репетиция становилась все богаче и полнее, и длинная колонна орудий, танков и транспортеров выстраивалась уже и на улице Горького, чтобы потом стремительно ринуться на Красную площадь и пройти мимо тихого мавзолея'* (Wilson 1961: 155).²² This is a curious intervention. Instead of moving from a negative state (being ragged) to a positive one (becoming complete), the parade in the Soviet translation enhances its already positive state, becoming even richer and fuller than it was already. This change avoids using any negative term alongside the ideologue *revolution*, thus shielding its canonical meaning. Very much in accordance with socialist-realist teleology, the Soviet Union can only go from good to better.

The ideologue 'worker' continued to attract censorial attention. Whereas in the 1930s and 1940s it was used within strict semantic boundaries, and even inserted into texts to align them with Soviet discursive norms, its treatment in the post-Stalinist period is not so easy to define. In this example from Archibald Cronin's novel *The Northern Light* (1958, published in *Inostrannaia literatura* in 1959), the sacrosanct 'worker' was erased and replaced with an unmarked word. This is surprising, especially since the novel is a critique of big business in the newspaper industry and the callous treatment of its workers. This sentence, from a dialogue between the novel's main characters, Nye and Smith, has been altered in translation from 'Hundreds of workers, including more than a hundred journalists, were flung on the scrap heap' (Cronin 1958: 43). The end result is: *'Сотни людей – в том числе около ста журналистов – были вышвырнуты на свалку'* (Cronin 1959: 84).²³ The substitution of 'people' for 'workers' here is especially significant given the importance of the worker as a symbol in Soviet discourse and its treatment in the earlier examples. While the translator might have opted for the term *'работники'* (non-manual worker) rather than *'рабочий'* (manual worker), the replacement by the neutral 'people' has the effect of slightly blunting the political thrust of the novel, which, after all, has a social theme: it tells the story of a small, dignified, moral newspaper owner being threatened by a larger, trashy tabloid rival. Here the translator could easily have chosen to ideologize the text; the fact that she did not hints, perhaps, at an increasing confusion over changing ideological norms at this time.

Another curious example of the growing ambiguity of censorial approaches to translation is taken from Compton Mackenzie's *Rockets Galore* (published in English in 1957 and in *Inostrannaia literatura* the following year),²⁴ where a negative reference to communists is reversed in the Russian version through the removal of the insult. The passage quoted here is a conversation between two of the principal characters, who are drinking in the pub on the island of Little Toddy: 'Another dram, Eachann, and you'll be as *full of wind* as a Communist' (1957: 60). This passage is translated as *'Еще одна рюмка, Эхан, и ты начнешь рассуждать, как заправский коммунист'* (1958a: 127).²⁵ The

intervention by the translator involves the replacement of a lexical item with negative connotative meaning with one bearing positive connotations, thus diffusing the criticism in the source text. Rather strangely, however, the change from 'be full of wind' to *рассуждать* [to reason] and the expansion of 'a Communist' to *заправский коммунист* [a real/true communist] creates the implication that Eachann's drunkenness and his irritating behaviour are qualities to be found – and admired – in a 'true communist'. This change renders the statement nonsensical, while the overall sense of the passage remains rather negative, and even sarcastic, despite the removal of the objectionable vocabulary. This intervention can hardly be considered successful.

In the post-Stalinist period, metaphors and slogans, as important vehicles of Soviet ideology, continued to be especially susceptible to ideological intervention in translation, although, again, they display increasing ambiguity during the late 1950s and early 1960s. One significant example, also drawn from *Rockets Galore*, is the translation of a slogan written on a banner by a group of Scottish campaigners on the island of Toddy. The group tricks the British authorities into cancelling the construction of a new nuclear base by dyeing the island's seagulls pink and claiming that they had discovered a new species that required conservation. The original English text (Mackenzie 1957: 237) contains the slogan in the following form: 'BIRD-WATCHERS OF THE WORLD UNITE'. This English phrase is, of course, a satirical modification of the communist slogan 'Workers of the world unite'. The slogan, famously publicized by Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto*, was a key term of Soviet ideological discourse with deep resonance and clear ideological significance. Printed on banners and incorporated into the state emblem, the phrase was, like 'red', 'revolution' and 'worker', reproduced constantly and deeply embedded in Soviet rhetoric. Its satirical recasting in *Rockets Galore* was the object of obvious concern on the part of the editors, who toyed with several different versions before the novel's eventual publication in Russian. Although no record of the editorial discussion about this extract survives, the typescripts contain clear evidence of the attention it received: on the typescript's cover page the page number is highlighted and circled emphatically in red pencil.

Since the slogan did not carry the same ideological charge in English, it was susceptible to comic subversion, as Mackenzie had done in his novel. However, its humorous distortion obviously caused the Soviet text producers considerable anxiety. The extant archival documents highlight their lack of certainty over how best to proceed. The translators, Rita Rait-Kovaleva and Boris Gribov, employed a slightly altered version in their first draft (Mackenzie 1958b: 144), avoiding an exact rendering of the loaded word *соединяйтесь* [unite] by substituting the prefix *об-* for the expected *со-*, so that it reads as follows: '*Любители птиц всех стран, объединяйтесь!*' (Lovers of birds of all countries, come together!). Alterations in an editorial hand restored the slogan to the canonical version; as a result, the ideological resonance was actually strengthened in comparison to the translator's initial word choice (Mackenzie 1958b: 144): '*Птицеловы всех стран, соединяйтесь!*'²⁶ A second typescript incorporating

the first editor's changes demonstrates further editorial equivocation. In this second version, which was signed off for publication, the editor radically altered the slogan, replacing it with a less marked alternative. This version survives in the published text (Makkenzi 1958c: 144), and reads: '*Сомкните ряды, птицеловы мира!*'²⁷ Once again, Epstein's 'evaluative conversion', the retention of the denotative meaning while altering the connotative meaning, is in plain view. The final Russian version, *сомкните ряды* [close ranks] is a standard military command, though it is less ideologically marked than the original slogan, with its direct reference to Marx and Engels. This clever choice allows for the retention of the comic effect, a central point in the novel's plot; without abandoning the semantics of the author's original choice, the ideologically marked item is avoided.

The slogan 'Workers of the World Unite!' is not, however, treated uniformly in the Thaw-era texts. A similarly corrupted use survives in the translation of Jay Deiss's *The Blue Chips* (1957), published in *Inostrannaia literatura*, two years after *Rockets Galore*. The section in question, which features a discussion between two of the characters about the use of scientists to spread political propaganda, retains the first half of the slogan in the translated version, but slightly alters the rest (Deiss 1957: 118; Deis 1960: 132). The English version reads: "'Scientists of the world, unite", chirped Miss Goldstein, "you have nothing to save but your brains!"' (Deiss 1957: 118). The Russian version is altered as follows: '– Ученые всех стран, соединяйтесь, – чирикнула мисс Гольдштейн – Вам нечего терять, кроме ваших голов!' (Deis 1960: 132).²⁸

Given the insistent concern over *Rockets Galore*, it is somewhat strange that the same key phrase of Soviet discourse has been retained in such an irony-heavy context. The change to the Russian version significantly alters the original idea. The English text implies that by refusing to be involved in propaganda, scientists will retain their academic standing (i.e. their brains). By contrast, the Russian version implies that if they are not involved in propaganda, they risk violence or oppression. Indeed the second half of this phrase is a corruption of a phrase from *The Communist Manifesto* in its Russian translation – '*Пусть господствующие классы содрожают перед Коммунистической Революцией. Пролетариям нечего терять кроме своих цепей*' (Marks and Engel's 1948: 82).²⁹ The slogan, as rendered in the Russian translation, actually brings Deiss's text closer to the *Manifesto*. This unexpected result clearly highlights the increasing ambiguity in the treatment of ideological language in translation during the 1950s and 1960s.

The same slogan is retained in the translation of Alan Sillitoe's *Key to the Door* (1961, Russian publication 1963), where it appears in a slightly ironic context, during a heated exchange between soldiers in Malaya about the merits of communism. The passage describes an attempt by the main character Brian and his soldier friends to get onto the train to Singapore. They are stopped briefly by an officious sergeant who tries to block their passage, as they have no rifles. The characters curse and talk about the higher ranks of the army with disdain in the English text: "'Workers of the world unite!" Jack shouted. "Let's get on that

bloody train”’ (Sillitoe 1961: 443). This is retained in the target text, which is rendered as ‘– Пролетарии всех стран, соединяйтесь! – крикнул Джек. – садиться в поезд!’ (Sillitoe 1963: 106).³⁰ The use of the slogan here is less obviously satirical than, for example, in *Rockets Galore*. It has not been altered or subverted in a noticeable way, despite being uttered by a non-communist character (while the main character Brian is very sympathetic to the Malayan communists, his friends are uninterested). In contrast to the close, anxious editorial attention paid to the use of this key phrase in *Rockets Galore*, there are no editorial markings to indicate that its use here provoked any real concern. No editorial changes were made, and so the published version retains the translator’s initial choices (Sillitoe 1962: 190).

Conclusion

The overriding concern on the part of the translators and editors in the texts analysed here is for the readers’ understanding of the text and the potential for meaning creation. A principal mode of intervention is the neutralization of ideologically marked language – the replacement of an ideologeme by a non-marked item so as to guard against a potentially heterodox interpretation of the text. This type of intervention aims to retain the denotative meaning of a particular English word while either imposing a single connotative meaning or delimiting the range of connotations in the Russian translation. The goal is to stave off the potentially heterodox meanings contained in the English originals. This desire arises from the particular ideological charge carried by an ideologeme: any non-canonical use is unacceptable in a context in which words and symbols, functioning as part of a symbolic canon and acting as markers of Soviet ideology, are treated in a quasi-religious. The interventions in these texts had the result of neutralizing the difference in the status of a particular word in the two cultures by realigning it with Soviet norms. These censorial translations sought to protect the ‘sacred’ symbols of Soviet authoritative discourse, those items that served as its points of semantic anchorage. Since these ideologemes functioned differently in the Western context than the Soviet one, they had to undergo transformation in order to mitigate the discrepancy in connotative meanings in the source and target cultures. The reproduction of Soviet discourse, through circulation of a limited range of approved symbols (Rolf 2009: 613), was protected by the erasure or neutralization of symbols that did not adhere to the established discursive paradigm.

Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of the unification of the linguistic market (or linguistic field) goes some way towards accounting for translation and censorship practices examined in the present chapter. The unification of the linguistic field, like that of other fields of cultural production, is brought about by ‘a whole set of specific institutions and mechanisms’ that exert control over the actors involved (Bourdieu 1991: 50), generating a new standard that provides linguistic capital (ibid.). Plamper (2001: 532) writes, in relation to the Stalinist period, that censorship was applied to cultural products not only in order to enforce ‘the positive

canon by cutting the cultural products listed in the *Perechen'* (the official list of state-classified information), but also in order to abolish heterodox interpretations of cultural texts. Plamper demonstrates that the increasing homogeneity of society in the Stalinist era resulted in a unification of the linguistic field, that is, the creation of 'a single discursive space to be shared by all' (2001: 542). In these circumstances, the multiplicity of meaning present in cultural products became more evident and was, as a result, repressed by the censorship apparatus. Stalinist censorship attempted to regulate the use of language by controlling the interpretations of the products circulating in society, a process Plamper has termed the 'purging of polyseme' (2001: 543). In translated texts a similar impulse can be observed: multiplicity of meanings could be suppressed and heterodoxy of the translated text eliminated through censorial translation; the result was that otherness was erased and foreign texts were incorporated into the target discourse. Where the polysemy arising from the fact of translation was inhibited, a Soviet 'legitimate language' (Bourdieu 1991: 39) could be imposed; this is one of the important discursive mechanisms by which the standardization of language in the Soviet Union was achieved. Whereas in the early years after the October Revolution there was a linguistic plurality and a sense that linguistic codes were still being established,³¹ this plurality began to disappear in the 1930s and public discourse began to be standardized; in essence, there was an 'evolution from expressiveness to ritualization' (Pöppel 2007: 257), and a 'party-state voice' was canonized (Gorham 2003: 128).

Patterns of authoritative language continued to be imposed into the post-Stalin era, in parallel with the continued existence and operation of Stalinist tropes in other cultural domains. However, despite these broader continuities, the linguistic control of foreign texts was noticeably less confident in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Items that were problematic and subject to manipulation in *Internatsional'naiia literatura* were sometimes left unaltered in the successor journal, and it became increasingly possible for translators to use ideologemes in unsanctioned ways. In the wake of increasingly positive political and cultural relations between East and West and the broader cultural changes of the Thaw, it became possible to push the boundaries of ideological language, allowing the potential creation of new meanings and discourses in these foreign texts.

Notes

- 1 Gal', real name Èleanora Iakovlevna Gal'perina (1912–1991), was a translator and critic. Apart from her work in *Internatsional'naiia literatura*, her most famous translations were *Le petit prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and works by J.D. Salinger and Harper Lee. Her translation manual, *Slovo zhivoe i mertvoe* (*The Word Living and Dead*, 1973) became a standard text in the Soviet literature on translation.
- 2 Natal'ia Al'bertovna Volzhina (1903–1981) was a translator from English who worked for *Internatsional'naiia literatura* and translated works by Jack London, among others.
- 3 Vera Maksimovna Toper (1890–1964) worked as a translator from English, French and German. She translated works by Charles Dickens, Ernest Hemingway and Jack London, among others.

- 4 For a detailed analysis of *Internatsional'naia literatura*'s role in Stalinist culture and publication patterns, see Safiullina and Platonov (2012).
- 5 *Ulysses* was subject to post-publication censorship; the pages containing the novel were, at some later point, torn from the copies held in the State Library of Foreign Literature.
- 6 Sacco and Vanzetti were convicted of murder and hanged in 1927. They are widely believed to have been convicted as a result of their anarchist beliefs. On the translation of texts concerning Sacco and Vanzetti, see Sherry (2010).
- 7 This is not your cynic Thayer.
- 8 On Sacco and Vanzetti as anarchist-communists, see Avrich (1996).
- 9 The Soviet attitude to Irish Republicanism was broadly positive, particularly in the early years of its existence. The Soviet government was the only one to recognize the first Dáil Éireann, the Irish parliament, founded in 1919. Between 1917 and 1922, there were substantial contacts between the two countries; these tailed off in the 1930s as a result of the isolationist policies pursued by both Ireland and the Soviet Union, and then as a result of the war.
- 10 Here and in all further examples, emphasis is added.
- 11 Although the others are no longer alive
Others must wander
We love you, and remember you
Sons of Ireland.
- 12 That sleepy hero wants the revolution tomorrow. He cannot wait.
- 13 The whole street was completely full of dancers – all men. They all danced behind their own orchestra of pipes and drums.
- 14 We will see a new, giant, wave of unemployment, a new American famine. Do not think that it is a prophet that tells you this. Our great American worker will tell you the same thing.
- 15 Thousands of *workers* are being thrown out onto the street without any hope of ever again returning to the factory.
- 16 On the critical Soviet approach to the USA, see, among others, Dallin (1947: 31–32); Shlapentokh (1988: 162–163).
- 17 Because in no case has the whole nation proved itself subordinate to the ruling classes to such an extent as in England.
- 18 We live only once, let us live not like rats, burrowing in a hole, but like wise and courageous people, who chose for themselves some kind of struggle.
- 19 It was all Greg, and that swine Obilitch.
- 20 But even in the most golden age of the golden century, a mass of 'reds' had big 'hardships'.
- 21 Unusually, *Meeting at a Far Meridian* was translated from a manuscript rather than a published version and appeared in Russian before the publication of the English original. The text was based on the author's visit to Moscow.
- 22 And every night the rehearsals became *much richer and fuller*, and the long column of weapons, tanks and transporters lined up on Gor'kii Street so as to quickly rush onto Red Square and pass the quiet mausoleum.
- 23 Hundreds of people – including around one hundred journalists – were kicked out onto the scrap heap.
- 24 It should be noted that in this novel most of the political material is retained, including one or two negative references to the Soviet Union (for example, a passage about the Soviet Union aiming rockets at the West).
- 25 One more glass, Eachann, and you'll start to talk like a true Communist.
- 26 Bird-catchers of the world, unite!
- 27 Close ranks, bird-catchers of the world!
- 28 Scientists of the world, unite! – chirped Miss Goldstein – You have nothing to lose except your heads!

- 29 Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. Writing about Soviet 'newspeak', Benedikt Sarnov (2002: 332) remembers the way in which this cliché was subverted in private speech when, for example, in a game of cards, players would mutter Эх, была – не была! Пролетариату ведь нечего терять кроме своих цепей ... [What will be will be! The proletariat has nothing to lose but their chains!].
- 30 Workers of the world, unite! – shouted Jack – get on the train!
- 31 On the early language culture of the Soviet Union and attempts to institute communication norms, see Gorham 2003.

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Part III

Soviet vernaculars after Communism

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8 Linguistic mnemonics

The communist language variety in contemporary Russian public discourse

Lara Ryazanova-Clarke

Introduction

When Soviet communism fell it was felt that the language associated with totalitarianism would quickly be forgotten. Patterns of speech ingrained in the devalued regime lost prestige in the public sphere so that the only future that was imagined for them was relegation to the dusty pages in obscure dictionaries of obsolete words. Scholarly literature reported on the rapid archaization of Soviet ways of expression in the mainstream and de-communization of the Russian language¹ (cf. Zemskaia 1996b; Mokienko and Nikitina 1998; Ryazanova-Clarke and Wade 1999; Guseinov 2003). Explaining this phenomenon, Vitalii Kostomarov observed soon after the end of communism, that ‘in general, society tends to choose today not the mainstream [means] that it had been accustomed to, but the peripheral ones, the ones that are untarnished and that are not associated with the recent past’ (1994: 38).

Yet, more than two decades later, Russian public discourse is increasingly engaging with the Soviet period, borrowing from, reframing and reinterpreting it (see for example Hutchings and Rulyova 2009; Radzikhovskii 2009; Andrews 2011; Gill 2013; Ryazanova-Clarke 2013, 2014a, 2014b). Towards the late 1990s, nostalgia for the Soviet period coupled with the managed amnesia with regard to the crimes of Soviet regime brought about a revival and re-actualization of Soviet symbols, iconography, rituals and artefacts (Nadkarni and Shevchenko 2004; Adler 2005; Oushakine 2007, 2009; Lee 2011; Gill 2011; Platt 2013; and others). Lisa Kirschenbaum argues that the currently deepening Russian nationalism ‘increasingly draws on what we might call Sovietcentrism, nostalgia for Soviet heroes, Soviet power, and even the Stalinist state that won the war’ (2011: 101). Social statistics support a sense that many Russians display a steady concern and emotional attachment to the Soviet past. According to the Russian public opinion research centre VTSIOM, in 2010 upon encountering the word ‘Soviet’, 21 per cent of the respondents reported the sense of nostalgia, an additional 18 per cent the feeling of pride and a further 17 per cent approval (Posternak 2010). Another analytical unit – the Levada Centre – reported that from 1992 to 2012, the percentage of those who regretted the fall of the Soviet Union has been fluctuating between 49 and 75 per cent (Levada 2009; also RAD 2010: 15; Zorkaia 2012: 216). The linguistic

instantiations of these processes have included the re-emergence in public discourse of the elements of canonical communist usage. Starting from the occurrences in the subversive and ludic functions, such as the jeering, mocking language play, elements derived from the Soviet discourse have become a staple of many genres in contemporary public sphere, being particularly active in advertising and marketing (Zemskaja 1996a; Zubova 2007; Sedakova 2010: 495).²

Leaving the above instances aside, this chapter explores other types of linguistic memory, that is, the patterns of behaviour of the linguistic remnants of Communist regime in contemporary Russian 'patriotic' public media discourse using examples of the regularly discussed issues related to the Soviet past – namely the narratives of the Victory Day and discussions around the figure of Stalin.³

Linguistic memory of totalitarianism

Klemperer

In his book on the language of the Third Reich, Victor Klemperer recounts that after the end of the Second World War, students of his Dresden adult education evening school, while in the middle of discussions of humanitarian themes covering culture and democracy, would 'be adrift' 'in the fog of Nazism' as soon as certain words such as 'heroism' were mentioned (Klemperer 2013 [1957]: 2). He writes: 'Nazism permeated the flesh and blood of the people through single words, idioms and sentence structures which were imposed on them in a million repetitions and taken on board mechanically and unconsciously' (ibid.: 15). In this observation, Klemperer raises the issue of linguistic memory, or, more specifically, of the location, nature and longevity of the meanings closely linked to totalitarian linguistic behaviour.

In Klemperer's perspective on totalitarian language, linguistic elements possess a strong manipulative power, catching users of linguistic signs unaware, and ensnaring them in their traps. Among those signs, he attributes an especially important role to the lexical categories which reflect a totalitarian organization of the worldview. The scholar proposes a powerful metaphor of a slow poison to describe the dictatorship of ideological language and the lingering effect of the words carrying on their insidious deed long after the person had been affected. He writes:

what happens if the cultivated language is made up of poisonous elements or has been made the bearer of poisons? Words can be like tiny doses of arsenic: they are swallowed unnoticed, appear to have no effect, and then after a little time the toxic reaction sets in after all.

(Ibid.: 15–16)

To construe linguistic elements as poison and the speaker as the unknowingly poisoned, is to cast the speaking subject as a passive patient vis-à-vis the agency

of language. In constructing such a relationship between the language and the speaker, Klemperer, reminds us of the linguistic thinkers, who believe that it is not the human beings that control the language but the language populates human beings, confining them to the 'prison-house of language'.⁴ For Klemperer, language has a sinister side: 'But language does not simply write and think for me, it also increasingly dictates my feelings and governs by entire spiritual being the more unquestioningly and unconsciously I abandon myself to it' (ibid.: 15).

When discussing a possibility for the society 'poisoned' by totalitarian language, to erase the imposed meanings out of the quagmire of their memory, Klemperer is less certain. He acknowledges that the totalitarian linguistic memories slowly abate but at the same time, stresses that this is a difficult process, and does not specify what means may help it on the way.

Bakhtin (and Voloshinov)

Having emerged in another major totalitarian regime, Bakhtinian heteroglot philosophy of the word may be tested to tease out answers to the kind of questions Klemperer poses. In discussing to what extent a linguistic element, after its context of use has been removed, retains memories of that context, Bakhtin argues from the premise that there are no "neutral" words and forms', instead 'language has been completely taken over, shot through with intentions and accents' (Bakhtin 1992: 293). The word has sediment of memory, which comprises the traces and flavours of the word's prior contexts of use and ideologies of interpretation: 'language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past' (ibid.: 291). Moreover, the way in which the word carries the memory of previous 'intentions and accents', is not passive but dialogical, so linguistic memory is constantly negotiated. Bakhtin's interpreter Michael Holquist comments that, in Bakhtinian understanding, the meaning in fact is never owned by either individuals or their contexts but rather temporarily appropriated, or 'rented' (1983: 2). 'Rental' and, therefore, a manifestation of the linguistic memory of an element, can be further explained through the notion of ventriloquation by which one voice, or a voice of one social group or a generation, speaks *through* another (Bakhtin 1992: 299).⁵ This is an active process so the ventriloquizing actor, or, for that matter, a linguistic community, for Bakhtin, has agency and control and may facilitate or resist the amnesia in relation to the past meanings, negotiating 'interference' and 'subordination' towards them (Wertsch 2007: 224).

The book *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* by Valentin Voloshinov (or possibly the same Bakhtin writing under this name) dwells even more closely on the ideological context that binds a linguistic sign (Voloshinov 2000 [1929]). It is argued there that the link between the ideological 'accent' and the sign is not at all fixed; furthermore, the word can only fulfil its ideological purpose if it is multi-accented; in fact, it is only in this condition that the linguistic element

maintains vitality and dynamism. Conversely, the word might well reach the stage when it loses its ideological memory, the stage which Voloshinov defines as the 'depletion' of an ideological sign. He explains that:

A sign that has been withdrawn from the intense social struggle, that is located beyond the boundary of the class struggle, will inevitably dwindle, denigrating into allegory, becoming an object of philological approach rather than of the living social intelligibility. Historical memory of humanity is full of such dead ideological signs which no longer are able to be an arena of clashes of the live social accents.

(Ibid.: 366)

Although Klemperer's and the Bakhtin-Voloshinov observations of the linguistic mnemonics in relation to the ideologically bound word are quite different, they complement each other in securing a point of departure for the rest of this chapter. More than just an emotive metaphor, Klemperer's poisonous words that capture speakers into a totalitarian worldview resonate with the notion in contemporary discourse studies of the knowledge-discourse interface, in which certain lexical items perform the role of indexes triggering an activation of the 'totalitarian' socio-cultural knowledge frame. Linguistically manifested knowledge frames, including those of the totalitarian fields, are construed to be society's mental storage spaces and memory representations (van Dijk 1998: 205, 2011); while those knowledge frames believed to be unquestionable common-sense truths are the forms through which naturalization (as well as re-naturalization) of ideology takes place throughout the social fabric (Flores Farfan and Hilzscheiter 2011). On the other hand, the Bakhtinian vision of linguistic mnemonics as a kind of 'rental' or ventriloquation allows us to see how contemporary contexts are 'systematically enriched by contextual parameters and principles of use' (Gumperz and Levinson 1996: 225) of communist language.

Speech representation is a powerful tool of framing the discourse and is a performance of ideological positioning. Orientation towards linguistic mnemonics is inherently metalinguistic as it allows the speakers to express their attitudes not only towards the reproduced language but also towards the socio-political frames that it indexes. Bakhtin distinguishes between 'heteroglossia', the unconscious switching between language varieties, and 'heteroglossia with awareness', the conscious manipulation of language choice (Bakhtin 1992: 295–296; see also Cazden 1989: 123). Metadiscursive awareness may be articulated in a large variety of ways and may be integrated into the strategies of linguistic mnemonics (Jaworski *et al.* 2004).

It could be assumed that, by examining today's strategies of use, representation or reinterpretation of the linguistic signs which in the past had an 'accent' of the totalitarian use, it may be possible to have a glimpse into their 'capacity to poison', that is, the capacity to recall and reinstall totalitarian frames in contemporary speaking community. To that end, the chapter explores the elements of Soviet Russian 'ventriloquized' today, the types of ventriloquation and its

potential for evoking and perpetuating the Soviet doxic knowledge frames. As an alternative, the possibility is accepted whereby, as Voloshinov predicts, the totalitarian forms may be negotiated to the level at which they experience the depletion in their ideological meaning and death.

Two sets of data, both related to the key themes occurring in contemporary recollections of the communist period, are to be discussed. The first set is diachronic and relates to the discourse of the commemorative narratives of the Victory Day in the War with Nazi Germany in the popular daily newspaper *Moskovskii Komsomolets* (MK).⁶ The samples compare two years – 2000 when the fifty-fifth anniversary of the Victory was celebrated, and 2010, on the sixty-fifth anniversary. The second, synchronic, data set is the discourse of the television chat shows about the role of Stalin in the Soviet society and today, which took place in 2010–2011 on three different national television channels. Transcripts of the following shows have been analysed: ‘Is Stalin a Genius or a Villain?’ (*Word by Word* programme series, Mir TV, 19 December 2010, henceforth Show 1); ‘Destalinization’ (*A Duel with Vladimir Soloviev* programme series, Rossiia-1, 20 February 2011, henceforth Show 2); and ‘Farewell, Stalin!’ (*The Open Studio* programme series, Channel 5, 5 March 2011, henceforth Show 3).

The Bourdieusian Russian

At the time when the communist regime waned, the initial response of the public discourse was a radical cut-off from the language associated with the Soviet ideology (Ryazanova-Clarke 2006, 2008). Pierre Bourdieu (1991) describes a similar discursive behaviour displayed at the times of fundamental social change as contestation for legitimacy between the orthodox and heterodox discourses, followed, in its cathartic stage, by a complete discursive suspension. The Russian communist language variety may be construed within the parameters of a typical Bourdieusian orthodox discourse, for it was aimed to express the doxa of the accepted and undisputed ideological truths by representing the existing communist world as natural, legitimate and self-evident (Bourdieu 1977: 164). The transition from the Soviet public discursive regime instantly changed the linguistic dispositions of Russian speakers, leading to a heretic break with the established order (Bourdieu 1991: 128–129). In the late *perestroika* and early post-Soviet years, this was manifested in the refusal by a large part of the Russian society to use the language associated with the communist regime.

Linguistic choices made at the time by post-Soviet Russian speakers and which expressed their metalinguistic stances, have been well documented (Elisratov 1994; Kakorina 1996; Khimik 2000; Dunn 1999; Zemskaia 1996b; Ryazanova-Clarke and Wade 1999; Ryazanova-Clarke 2000 and others). Scholars have argued that the suspension of the doxic language took place through the arsenal of the so-called ‘landslide of the norm’ (Lunde and Roesen 2006). In the pursuit of heterodoxy and differentiation, the new legitimate styles were produced primarily through the ‘detabooization’ (Dulichenko 1994: 145)

of the previously marginal and illegitimate language. The Russian discursive trajectories proved Bourdieu right in many details: following his predictions, the low, colloquial, popular, ‘crude’, ‘vulgar’, ‘sloppy’ and ‘uncouth’ language was celebrated (1991: 60). Above and beyond what was envisaged by Bourdieu, the Russian heresy displayed more stylistic complexity, as the heretical potential of high registers – such as the formerly repressed ecclesiastical style and pre-revolutionary bookish lexical elements – also entered the linguistic cauldron (Ryazanova-Clarke and Wade 1999: 75–85). Accounts of the early post-Soviet public discourse characteristics evidently demonstrate that, in that period, the semantic stability of the communist ideological language was broken, its value was discounted, and the coherence and unquestionable common-sense qualities of the doxa depleted (Ryazanova-Clarke 2008). This Bourdieusian context is important to consider when we discuss the attempts to resurrection of the communist variety of Russian.

The discourse of Victory Day, 2000–2010

How the media talks about Victory Day has long been indicative of the formation of national identity, the state’s ideological leanings and even the level of civil freedoms in Russia.⁷ Graeme Gill identifies the Great Patriotic War as the most important among the central themes that, since *perestroika*, evoked passionate debates about the nature of the communist regime and Stalin’s leadership (Gill 2013: 159). Following the spirit of the heretical break, President Yeltsin initially abandoned the Soviet-style military marches on 9 May in favour of a more low-key expression of mourning for the fallen. For a while afterwards, there was a sense that the Soviet cult of the war, desacralized by the *glasnost*-triggered emergence of discreditable facts and unpleasant truths, might have been banished for ever (Tumarkin 1994: 174). However, not that long after, in 1995, the marches were restored; since 2000 many Soviet rituals were reinstated; and since 2008 the display of weapons at the Victory parades was resumed (Gill 2013: 163). In comparison with other Soviet narratives, those commemorating Victory Day have arguably demonstrated a greater resilience and have been used for framing fundamentally conservative, patriotic and pedagogically packaged knowledge. As Helena Goscilo notes,

Since external military threat dictates jettisoning avant-garde, liberal, or dissenting tendencies so as to unite a given nation through hallowed traditions jeopardized by the enemy, narratives of war ... rely on values and mores that have withstood the test of time – i.e. are by definition conservative.

(2012: 171)

The stability of the War ‘master narrative’ has been noted, for example, in Dina Khapaeva’s study of Russian opinion polls. She asserts that ‘the war myth’ is ‘the only Soviet myth that survived the destruction of Soviet mythology without the slightest damage’ (2009: 367). Similarly, the folklorist Jeanmarie

Rouhier-Willoughby's work devoted to the post-Soviet Victory Day celebration rituals across Russian cities concludes that they have been preserved almost intact, including the nostalgic glorification of the time 'when the Soviet Union was at its most powerful' (2003: 32). Insofar as we are dealing with the narrative discussed in scholarship as conservative and stable we could expect it to yield information about discursive dynamics as any diversion from the traditional canon – originally expressed in the communist variety – will be especially notable.

V-Day 2000

On 7 May 2000, the issue of *Moskovskii Komsomolets* offered its readers a narration of Victory Day whose ties to Soviet celebratory texts seemed to be unashamedly severed. The theme of Victory in the War was almost lost among the starkly heterodox context, including the headlines that few would find relevant for a solemn occasion: 'The swindler fed dinners to his victims' and 'The parrot boiled in a soup was resuscitated'. No surprise that the V-Day-related material assumed a similar, rather frivolous style, metalinguistically manifesting its departure from the communist authoritative code. Consider, for example, the use of categorization and terms of address in the paper's editorial board's note of congratulations to the nation:

- (1) Ну, братцы мои, господа хорошие, новые русские, старые русские, россияне и все, все, все, живущие на этой земле! Самый светлый праздник наступает.⁸

(MK 7 May 2000)

Like many communist variety clichés, the message attempts to construct inclusiveness of the celebrating community, but at this the similarity stops. Rather than Soviet-style addresses to the nation, the excerpt resembles incantations of petty peddlers offering their unsophisticated goods on suburban trains or the underground. The address features the post-Soviet term *россияне* [citizens of Russia], introduced by Yeltsin as a democratic inclusive reference to all living in Russia regardless of their ethnicity. The term contains a metalinguistic element too: at the time of its introduction, it was a replacement of and distancing from the established Soviet terms of collective addresses, *дорогие советские граждане, товарищи* [dear Soviet citizens, comrades]. To compare, 30 years earlier, on 9 May 1970, *Pravda*'s editorial congratulation was fully compliant with the existing communist canon, *С праздником Победы, товарищи!*⁹ (*Pravda* 9 May 1970).

Register-wise, *Moskovskii Komsomolets* of 2000 mixes the semi-official *россияне* together with the heterodox linguistic elements associated with the low culture and 'degraded' speech contexts. The address *господа хорошие* [good gentlemen] which expanded its circulation in the post-Soviet period, earlier occurred predominantly as a marker of subservient or downtrodden status of the

speaker in represented speech related to pre-revolutionary contexts (for example, beggars' pleadings, criminal litany, etc.).¹⁰ The term *братья мои* [my brothers] evokes informal contexts, while *новые русские* [new Russians] is usually used to express derision (while also being the subject of numerous jokes).¹¹ The expression *все-все-все* [everybody, everybody, everybody] brings to memory the metallic dative phrase of the early Soviet telegraphic announcements,¹² but equally, the no less familiar *Винни Пух и все-все-все* [*Winnie the Pooh and Everybody, Everybody, Everybody*], the title of the Russian translation of Alan Alexander Milne's children's book *Winnie the Pooh*. In addition, the multi-voicedness of the address blends in the religious discourse, for the noun *праздник* [holiday] qualified by the attribute *светлый* [bright] is a set phrase used in traditional Russian Orthodox culture in the depiction of Easter.¹³ Thus the text of the newspaper congratulation shimmers with Bakhtinian polyphony and Bourdieusian heterodoxy, those fresh winds that chase the Soviet linguistic memories away from the public discourse: now it is in the mode of forgetting, putting the dead ideological signs to rest.

The heterodox nature of the knowledge frames displayed in the V-Day issue of *MK* in 2000 may be further evidenced by the inclusion of an irreverent joke (*anekdot*) within the war-themed material (2). Stierlitz (*Shtirlits*), the character of the joke, is a protagonist of the cult Soviet spy film *The Seventeen Moments of Spring*, made in 1973. In the film, Max Otto von Stierlitz was a conspiracy name of a Soviet spy working undercover in the German Wehrmacht, played by the heartthrob Viacheslav Tikhonov. Subsequently, the figure of Stierlitz became a focus of the subversive humour in the Soviet-era counter-culture, which turned him into a character of innumerable jokes (Graham 2009: 63–82). The joke ventriloquized by *MK* goes like this:

- (2) Борман мирно спал. Вдруг в дверь его квартиры кто-то настойчиво постучал. Открыв дверь, Борман увидел человека в шинели, валенках, буденовке и с автоматом Калашникова за спиной. Человек сказал шепотом:
- Слоны идут на север!
 - Слоны идут в жопу! А Штирлиц живет этажом выше! – во весь голос заорал Борман.¹⁴

In 2000, to borrow a voice that narrates a Stierlitz joke for the V-Day newspaper issue would certainly be a daring display of a risqué, carnivalesque spirit of heterodoxy, which denies legitimacy to the communist knowledge frames and pokes fun at the precious glorified stories of the wartime intelligence. The recontextualization of the joke in the post-Soviet media evokes the memory of anti-Soviet underground language, while the uneuphemized obscenity, strictly tabooed within the communist language variety norms, is now transposed ('loaned') from the oral genre of the 1970–1980s city folklore into the printed public language.

Overall, it appears that the discursive strategies employed in *MK* 2000 in the treatment of such a patriotic and conservative theme as V-Day contravene

the views about the stability of the war narratives. Rather, the discourse tends to continue the celebration of linguistic heresy common in the 1990s, manifesting its apparently still high symbolic value.

V-Day 2010

Fast-forward ten years, and we will discover that the 2010 Victory discourse of *Moskovskii Komsomolets* features no naughty language of this sort. Neither controversial themes nor irreverent jokes are to be found in the newspaper issue of 8 May, the last before the holiday break. Since 2000, the V-Day narrative had visibly evolved and the newspaper's language choices now steadily recapture elements of the communist variety, metadiscursively signalling a return to the Soviet-style common-sense knowledge about the Great Patriotic War. Consider, for example, excerpt (3):

- (3) В полях Подмоскoвья кровью тысяч бойцов и командиров написаны яркие победные страницы истории Великой Отечественной войны. Память о нашей Победе священна, и нельзя забывать, какой ценой завоевана мирная жизнь в 1941–1945-м. О том, как воевало Подмоскoвье с врагом, и о необходимости сегодня защищать завоевания нашей Победы – беседа с губернатором Московской области, Героем Советского Союза Борисом Громыным.¹⁵

(MK 8 May 2010)

Observing the elements making up this passage – the register, the vocabulary, the word order – it becomes clear that the effect of this contemporary text rests to a large extent on the rejigging of the linguistic memory of the Soviet authoritative discourse. Borrowed from the communist linguistic variety are the steely high-flown formulas containing syntactic inversions (*кровью [...] написаны страницы* [with blood [...] pages are written]; *о том, как воевало Подмоскoвье – беседа* [about how the Moscow region fought – is our conversation]), and cliché phrases such as *память священна* [memory is sacred], *защитить завоевания* [to defend the conquest], *поля Подмоскoвья* [the battlefields in the Moscow region], *какой ценой завоевана мирная жизнь* [at what price the peace has been won]. The key conceptual metaphors of communist texts such as *blood is ink* and *history is a book* are reified in the phrase *кровью [...] написаны яркие победные страницы истории* [bright victorious pages of history are written in blood]. Through the phrase *наша победа* [our Victory], the fundamental Soviet dichotomy *враг – мы* [enemy – us] is reconstructed, while the inference of the ongoing threat from the unnamed enemy is contained in the sequence *о необходимости сегодня защищать завоевания нашей Победы* [about the need today to defend the conquests of our Victory]. In addition, the pride in the title of the 'Hero of the Soviet Union', devalued in the early post-Soviet days, is re-legitimized and re-enacted in the sentence introducing the veteran interviewee. By foregrounding that the said 'Hero' is also the Governor

of the Moscow Region, the text forges a direct link between the communist variety and the official discourse associated with the present-day authorities.

Linguistic memories are also released by the grammar layers buttressing Soviet doxic frames. For example, in the manner of official Soviet language, the text depersonalizes the actors of the war. The passive construction used in the phrase *кровью тысяч бойцов и командиров написаны яркие победные страницы* turns the war participants into the instrument of the Victory's glory, the blood-ink providers for history. Compare this with the completely opposite, humane and sympathetic style, in which the war actors were typically represented in the V-Day newspaper texts in the early post-Soviet period, on 8 May 1991 (4):

- (4) Ни официальная медь, ни грохот парадов, ни профессионально ликующие голоса из репродукторов, ни залпы салютов не сумели заглушить человеческую сущность – вечную боль о погибших, о сломанных судьбах, о миллионах искалеченных войной. Наверное, будет немало домов, где в этот день поставят на стол стопку, прикрытую кусочком черного хлеба – стопку победителя, павшего в бою или умершего от ран много лет спустя. Но, вспоминая умерших, негоже забыть о живых, которых осталось не так уж много. И участь которых, увы, недостойна славы победителей.¹⁶

(*Argumenty i Fakty* 8 May 1991)

In excerpt (4), the central discursive position of the victor is allocated to the war participants, both to those still alive and those who have died. The text is not shy to suggest that their death is far from always being heroic; it is mentioned that they die from their wounds and many years later. In the manner of post-Soviet heterodoxy, the officialdom is bracketed out through the deployment of the sequence of negative clauses (*не ... ни, ни, ни, ни*) in their representation in the first sentence. The noun *боль* [pain], modified by *вечная* [ever-lasting], establishes the discursive tone. The text uses simple, non-pathos vocabulary (*стопка* [a vodka shot glass], *кусочек черного хлеба* [a piece of rye bread]), which evokes the simple peasant ritual of remembering the dead. The text further represents the subjects of the war by emphasizing the memory of human sufferings, expressed with the passive voice of the past participle phrases – *сломанные судьбы* [broken lives], *искалеченные войной* [disfigured by the war], *погибшие* [perished].

In contrast, the comparison of the 2010 Victory narrative with the language used in the V-Day issues of the Late Soviet papers makes evident instances of the represented (ventriloquized) Soviet orthodox discourse. Table 8.1 demonstrates similarities between the communist variety used in the issue of *Izvestiia* of May 1980 and that of *Moskovskii komsomolets* 2010.

In relation to both the communist knowledge frames and their specific linguistic articulation, extracts from *Moskovsky Komsomolets* in Table 8.1 illustrate the type of ventriloquation in which, exactly as Bakhtin imagined, one

Table 8.1 Language of the V-Day narratives, 1980 and 2010

<i>Communist variety: knowledge frames and linguistic elements</i>	<i>Izvestiia 8 May 1980</i>	<i>Moskovskii komсомоlets 8 May 2010</i>
'History is a book', 'victory is a page' metaphors; positive representation through the epithet <i>яркий</i> [bright], appellation to the historical scale as the strategy of aggrandization	<i>Исторический День Победы навсегда останется яркой и незабываемой страницей в героической летописи Советского государства.</i> [The historical Victory Day will forever remain a bright and unforgettable page in the heroic chronicles of the Soviet State.]	<i>В полях Подмосковья кровью тысяч бойцов и командиров написаны яркие победные страницы истории Великой Отечественной войны.</i> [In the battlefields around Moscow the bright victorious pages in the history of the Great Patriotic War are written in blood.]
Linkage of the war memory with the epithet <i>священный</i> [sacred] imbued with the ecclesiastical connotations	<i>священная память, священная война</i> [sacred memory, sacred war]	<i>Память о нашей Победе священна</i> [Memory of our Victory is sacred]
The over-use of the attribute <i>великий</i> [great], fixed collocations	<i>великий(-ая):</i> (патриотический) подвиг, Отечественная, победа, поход (советской армии), октябрь [great: patriotic feat, Patriotic [war], victory, (Soviet Army) march, October]	<i>великий(-ая):</i> подвиг, Отечественная, победа, дата, праздник, война [great: feat, Patriotic [war], victory, date, holiday, war]
Lessons of the war interpreted as the continuous stand-off between 'us' and 'the enemy'	Ее уроки являются грозным предупреждением всем любителям играть с огнем. [Its lessons are severe warnings for all who like to play with fire.]	о необходимости сегодня защищать завоевания нашей Победы [about the need to defend today the results of the conquest of our Victory]

generation is speaking through another. Sovietisms allow the past to seep through from the yellowed pages of the old communist press and interfere with the present. The 'rental' of the communist variety elements in this case looks more like a repetition, a merger of the original and the copy, while a second, contemporary voice of the diglossia appears to be subdued.¹⁷

But what does then this wholesale import of the Soviet vernacular mean provided that a return to the Soviet variety takes place after a palpable discursive gap filled with a long-lasting feast of heterodoxy? The new wave of anachronistic language use in the discourse about the War Victory can hardly be a result of an automatic language choice made by the subjects brainwashed and 'poisoned' by totalitarian code, because, as the earlier discourse demonstrates, the disruption of the automatic link has to be accounted for. Manipulative 'renting with awareness' may be suggested as a more plausible explanation for this developing discursive strategy. This type of use aligns the discourse with other current processes within Putin regime (including the Medvedev presidential break) that attempt to construct a new conservative ideology conjured up from the elements of the ideologies of both the tsarist and Soviet history. Anna Novikova succinctly summarizes the Sovietization trend with regard to the central television aesthetics, noting that 'on public holidays and during important political events viewers are being reminded that "in flesh and blood" their origins are Soviet' (2010: 288). The honing of the war narrative becomes even more essential for Mr Putin's rule, as he has arguably made the Second World War 'a personal event' which helps reinforce his masculine image as both an autocrat and a defender of Russia (Wood 2011).

The metadiscursive awareness assumed by the 'rented' usage, coupled with the subdued multi-accentedness, indicates re-alliance of the current knowledge frames with some of those structuring the totalitarian ideology of the past. Under closer scrutiny, though, today the Soviet doxic frames do not hold up. The new fields, into which the recontextualized communist vernacular elements are placed, turn what was the common sense of the totalitarian phrases into ambiguous concepts. Unsupported by Soviet ideological habitus, the ventriloquated and dislocated signifiers are voided and indexicality links severed. To take our earlier example, the sentence about the 'bright victorious pages of history' that 'are written with blood of soldiers', captures the positive emotive overtone related to sacrifice that had been inherent to communist ideology. However, in the current Russian regime, which officially subscribes to the post-totalitarian civilizational doctrine and whose knowledge frames attribute the highest value to human life, the phrase sounds not only emotionally ambiguous but morally deficient. In order to overcome the dissonance, the reader may push the metaphorical element onto the periphery and understand the phrase in the direct sense: 'the pages are bright because of the colour of blood'. This produces a further incongruity as the resultant sense, instead of the intended sombre pride, yields emotionally callous and sinister overtones.

Thus, rather than constituting the new orthodoxy, the use of communist language in the War narrative creates lacunae in the transposed knowledge frames. It is therefore likely to indicate some difficulty experienced by the current

dominant discourse in marshalling a new language for constructing central ideas for Russian society. Sergei Oushakine (2000) applied Roman Jakobson's term of linguistic aphasia to diagnose a traumatic lack of articulation for the youth generation of the 1990s. Going by the official media Victory discourse of the 2010, it might also lend itself to an explanation by aphasia, and evidence the spread of the syndrome into wider public spheres so far unsuccessfully fumbling for a national set of unifying meanings.

To sum up, the discursive dynamics from 2000 to 2010 in relation to the Soviet official language tend to suggest that a significant shift occurred in discursive strategies deployed in V-Day narrations. Starting from the resolute break from the knowledge frames and articulations with a markedness of the communist variety, the narrative returned to the Soviet way of expression. In the latter period, the communist variety was broadly ventriloquized in the ideologically relevant for the current regime domains. However, the type of ventriloquation, occurring in the forms indistinguishable from Soviet orthodox discourse, does not seem to be fully suitable, or fully congruous, to create a post-Soviet grand narrative, even of this culturally coherent issue.

Stalinism as 'an auteur project'

In order to pinpoint other types of communist variety usage, I turn to my second set of data, drawn from the discourse of current televised debates about Stalin. All three shows, broadcast in the winter of 2010–2011, belong to the recent trend to rehabilitate Stalin and bring him into the focus of media discussions of the 'usable past'. Television has been essential in the construction of the Putin-era historical canon of 'pop history', in which Stalin – described in one of the recent history textbooks as an 'efficient manager' – has been increasingly included in the 'privileged list' of those 'great reformers during whose reigns the empire, whether it was tsarist or Soviet, flourished' (Liñán 2010: 169). The shows in question have a common theme and format: participants in the studio (and some interviewed in the street) divided into the groups of 'Stalinists' and 'anti-Stalinists' passionately and loudly discuss the role of Stalin in Soviet and Russian history. To support their position, speakers from both camps employ elements of the communist variety; the sections below will focus on the specific strategies of such use.

The language of the anti-Stalinists

The data demonstrates that, in the speech of 'anti-Stalinists', instances of linguistic elements related to the communist regime occur prominently within the strategy of deconstructing and debunking the Soviet doxic frames. The communist-variety elements are often used together with additional metacommentary markers expressing the speaker's stance towards the used element. Consider, for example (5), which is a move¹⁸ of the writer and War veteran Daniil Granin:

- (5) GRANIN: Уже 6-го ноября 41-го года нам в *наших газетах*, даже не *фронт*овой, а *дивизионной*, было напечатано выступление Сталина, что *немцы*, значит, 6-го ноября 41-го года *потеряли* четыре с половиной миллиона. Даже на *нашем участке фронта*, который я знаю, да я не знаю всего остального, видно было, что это *вранье*.¹⁹

(Show 3)

Granin's move displays diglossia – switching between the ventriloquized Soviet language of the War and the unmarked variety which he uses to evaluate the former. The code switching is visibly triggered by the personalized memory of the War and is grammatically signalled by the speaker's shift from the past tense to the historical present (*Даже на нашем участке фронта, который я знаю, okay, I do not know all the rest*) and the use of the pronoun *наши* [our side]. These tools allow Granin to contextualize his narrative within the 're-lived experience' imagining himself back in the role of a rank-and-file War participant. The past is also brought into the present by using the wartime historicisms *фронт*овая, *дивизионная газета* [the front, division paper], *участок фронта* [a section of the front], *немцы потеряли* [Germans lost], although the writer seems to be avoiding more ideologically loaded and apparent markers of the communist variety. The totalitarian knowledge frame is reproduced through Granin's representation of Stalin's speech – here the massaged, politically expedient figures index the conventional set-up of the authoritative discourse. The other voice employed by Granin contains the strategy of deconstruction of the language 'on loan', in the form of the metalinguistic qualifier *вранье* [an utter lie] used in relation to the represented Stalin's language.

In examples (6) and (7), another anti-Stalinist, the historian Iurii Pivovarov, also switches codes, one of which borrows resources from the communist variety. These are exemplified by the phrases *на пике сталинских побед* and *стройки, заводы*:

- (6) PIVOVAROV: Э, прав Ерофеев, Россия в начале века выглядела намного лучше, чем даже *на пике сталинский побед в кавычках*

(Show 3)²⁰

- (7) PIVOVAROV: Все эти *стройки*, все эти *заводы*, все это *фигня*, все. Главное – человек.

(Show 3)²¹

The historian's phrases taken 'on loan' thematically relate to the totalitarian myth that the rapid and broad industrialization under Stalin's leadership was a major breakthrough vital for the country's survival, one that justified the enormous human cost paid for its implementation. Alongside the totalitarian elements, Pivovarov uses explicit metalinguistic comments (*в кавычках* [in

inverted commas], *фигня* [bullshit], and the shifters *все эти* [all these]), which, in a more direct way than the one used by Granin, target the represented forms of expression. In this way, Pivovarov debunks the doxic myth by overtly indicating that the communist expression – *на пике сталинских побед* [at the peak of Stalin's victories] – is used indirectly, as reported and non-trustworthy language; and linguistically performing ironic distancing.²² The second metalinguistic marker is the more recent slang noun *фигня* (bullshit),²³ which the historian uses to qualify another set of indexes of Stalinist totalitarianism – *стройки* [construction sites], *заводы* [factories] and to indicate a derogatory attitude towards these indexes. In effect, metacomunist markers provide an unambiguous indication that the instances of communist language variety play a role in the dismantling strategy towards the totalitarian knowledge frames.

The language of the 'Stalinists': transmitting Stalinism

In comparison with the group of 'anti-Stalinists', those speaking on the shows from the Stalinist position seem to deploy more versatile strategies when using elements of the communist authoritative language. Consider examples (8)–(10), which copiously reproduce elements of the communist variety.

- (8) PROKHANOV: А твоему секунданту, который много интересного сказал про еврейскую литературу времен *товарища Сталина* ... *Величие Сталина* ...

SOLOVIEV: Ведите себя прилично.

PROKHANOV: *Величие Сталина* – пока пока он отдыхает от своего косноязычия – *состоит в том, что он создал великую* ...

EROFEEV: да ты не волнуйся

PROKHANOV: *создал великое государство, и это государство победило мировое зло*.²⁴

(Show 2)

- (9) TRUBITSYN: Есть, есть *знаменитое постановление товарища Сталина от 13-го мая 1946 года*.²⁵

(Show 1)

- (10) A participant in the street of Vladikavkaz: Сталин был *вождем*. Это не секрет. Все добрые люди об этом на всю жизнь будут помнить, *о Сталине мудром, родном и любимом*.²⁶

(Show 1)

The three speakers on the 'Stalinist' side of the debate, the writer Alexander Prokhanov, the former Soviet plant director Trubitsyn and the anonymous participant from Vladikavkaz position themselves within the totalitarian code of the Stalinist period. One of the cues for their embeddedness in communist variety is that all three use the Soviet pseudo-democratic title *товарищ* [comrade] to refer

to Stalin. Prokhanov speaking nervously, gasping for breath from the excitement whipped up by the topic, his diglossia includes a contemporary media voice that affords a squabbling demotic tone in addressing his opponent, the liberal writer Erofeev (пока он отдыхает от своего косноязычия [while he has a rest from his tongue-tightness]) and the ritualistic ventriloquizing of the communist variety. The latter is articulated in Prokhanov's overlexicalization of the notion of 'greatness' (*величие – величие – великую – великий*), the strategy by which he reproduces the knowledge frame of Soviet 'outstanding achievements'. In the Soviet period, the frame was manifested in the high-flown *topoi* of augmentation and aggrandization buttressing Soviet discursive gigantomania (Fesenko and Fesenko 1955: 30). Another echo of the communist variety is the strategy of genericization (van Leeuwen 2008: 35) apparent in his unspecified claims that the Soviet state vanquished the world's evil. Having the world's evil on the one side of this black and white worldview inevitably ascribes to the Stalin state the quality of the 'force of the world goodness'.

The speaker from Vladikavkaz slips in the term *вождь* [leader] imbued with the totalitarian nuance and further performs the role of an animator (Goffman 1981) voicing/ventriloquizing a line from the lyrics of the 1938 'Cantata about Stalin', a servile eulogy written at the height of Stalin's personality cult by Mikhail Iniushkin to the music by Aleksandr Aleksandrov.²⁷ Thus in the above examples, the communist code is appropriated by the participants and used to resurrect the doxic Soviet frames linked to communist ideology and to transmit them into the present as a legitimate code. The absence of metalinguistic comments in the moves reinforces the sense that the speakers have fully internalized the forms and frames they so enthusiastically reproduce.

Switching, commenting, normalizing

By contrast, in excerpt (11) the pro-Kremlin political spin-doctor Sergei Kurginian perpetuates the communist language and knowledge frames not only by switching to the Soviet code but also by densely adding to it a number of implicit metalinguistic devices.

- (11) KURGINIAN: Ну как раньше говорилось, а это не при Сталине, а при Хрущеве, а это советский народ, и всегда спрашивали значит, какой народ? – советский, ну он же не другой. Что, дальше спрашивали, под чьим руководством? Под руководством ленинской коммунистической партии. Было понятно.²⁸

(Show 3)

In this imagined dialogue, Kurginian recreates Soviet didactic discourse by borrowing its ritualistic formulas. His metadiscursive comment *как раньше говорилось* [as we used to say before] suggests that he is aware that the authoritative word sequences he quotes belong to the past; however, his concluding statement *было понятно* [it was clear] designates the communist

variety as the only language capable of ascribing the correct definitions to the social world. Thus, through presenting it as the language of clarity and common sense, Kurginian normalizes the communist code. Similarly to Prokhanov, Kurginian appropriates the strategy of genericization, manifested in the impersonal forms (*говорилось, спрашивали, было понятно*) signalling a vague speaking agency. Although it is not clear who is doing the asking and answering, Kurginian's internal dialogue brings to the fore the totalitarian contexts of learning by rote practised in Soviet education or at numerous political briefings.²⁹ The excerpt brilliantly exemplifies the circularity inherent in communist doxic frames. It neither provides, nor imagines, any new information: the question-and-answer sequences are mutually determined, the answers are known beforehand and no alternatives are possible. Alexei Yurchak defines this kind of discourse as one with prior temporality, whereby 'all types of information, new and old were presented as knowledge previously asserted and commonly known' (2006: 61). Thus, in the short space of his discursive performance, Kurginian plunges his audience into a world of authoritative orthodoxy, reproducing and normalizing, through the circularity and citationality of the communist formulas, the status quo of the totalitarian doxa; while both kinds of metalanguage, the represented speech and the commentary, work here to transpose the old frames through time.

Elaboration of the communist variety formulas

Apart from the strategies of full immersion into the communist variety or using diglossia and regularly switching to the totalitarian voice, the 'Stalinists' could choose the tactics to elaborate the doxic Soviet expressions along the internal logic of their linguistic dispositions and models. An example of this strategy can be seen in (12) which is an excerpt from the already cited battle of words between two writers, the Stalin admirer Alexander Prokhanov and the liberal intellectual Victor Erofeev:

- (12) PROKHANOV: По существу, это поколение, эта элита, которая сейчас живет в несчастной стране и пользуется остаточными благами, которые сделал Сталин — мы ведь ... доели все *сталинское наследство*, в течение всех этих лет доедали — *сталинские дороги, сталинский космос* ...
 EROFEEV: Вот это бред...
 P: *Сталинские машины, сталинский флот*³⁰...
 E: Это бред ... про космос это бред...
 P: И *сельское хозяйство*.³¹ (Show 2)

In the dialogue, Prokhanov actualizes one of the fundamental formulas of totalitarian language: the noun phrases modified by the attribute 'Stalinist'. Andrei Fesenko and Tat'ana Fesenko (1955: 29) point out a tendency in Soviet language to use proper names as sources for forming approbative derivatives including,

first and foremost, the epithet *сталинский* [Stalin's, Stalinist], which during Stalin rule was a synonym of 'ideologically approved' but also of 'top class', and 'the very best'. The frequency peak in the adjective's use was in 1950 when it reached 11 per million (*Natsional'nyi korpus*).

The major milestones in the life of the state, such as the victorious battles in the War or Soviet social policy had to be associated with Stalin's name; hence phrases such as *десять сталинских ударов* [the ten Stalin's blows]³² and *сталинская забота о человеке* [Stalinist care about a human being]. In the communist parlance, *сталинский* would then enter into collocates and qualify such disparate nouns as *план* [plan], *конституция* [Constitution], *золотой век литературы* [golden age of literature], *закалка* [hardening], *школа* [school], *выучка* [training], *урожай* [harvest] and *бюджет* [budget].

The 'magic' achieved by adding the qualifier derived from the name of the Leader is reflected in the 1939 poem written by Vasilii Lebedev-Kumach on the subject of the state budget approval. The poet also served as a deputy of the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation, and the poem containing the following stanza (13) was incorporated into his speech delivered at the Second Session of the Supreme Council on 28 July 1939, dedicated to a (unanimous) confirmation of the year's republic's budget:

- (13) Бюджет. В коротком слове этом
Ничего как будто чудесного нет.
Но оно загорится волшебным светом
Если мы скажем '*Сталинский бюджет*'.³³

(Rech' deputata 1939; see also Shafer 2006)

Prokhanov engages in a complex diglossia: on the one hand, he repeats the above doxic knowledge frame by coining phrases in which the adjective *сталинский* continues serving as a central superlative modifier (*сталинские машины, флот, сельское хозяйство* [Stalinist cars, fleet, agriculture]); on the other, he elaborates and extends the model. The extension is particularly evident with regard to combinations which have produced the internally clashing, anachronistic notions that is *сталинские дороги* [Stalinist roads], and *сталинский космос* [Stalinist outer space [exploration]]. The space exploration which took place after Stalin's death and the roads especially, the state of which is still disastrous in Russia, have no relevance to the Stalinist period (which explains Erofeev's shock reaction to Prokhanov's assertions). However, by using the model and moderating with the adjective *сталинский* the later notions, Prokhanov places them in the imagined, expandable category of 'Soviet achievements'. Consequently, the elaboration of the totalitarian doxic frame itself serves as a justification for its viability and virility. The performance of a temporal shift and the frame elaboration allow Prokhanov to perpetuate the Soviet doxa into the present, synchronizing history, and to present the old frames as being ready to claim a new status quo for today's narratives.

Recontextualization and substitution

Greg Urban argues that in the process in which a culture moves from the past into future, the major role is played not so much by repetitions but by novel productions that assimilate earlier manifestations of culture while not copying the earlier 'original' (2001: 5). In support of Urban's observation, a substantial number of examples of the 'Stalinists' moves in our shows demonstrate that the speakers on the programmes may opt for supportive narratives of Stalinism that contain no borrowings from the communist discourse. In fact, the participants often prefer to clothe their legitimation of Stalinism in an emphatically contemporary idiom. Consider, for example, the use of the term *демократия* [democracy] by the author of several political books and conspiracy theories Iurii Mukhin (14):

- (14) МУХИН: И при Сталине считалась демократия, и сейчас считается демократия. Однако при Сталине были отличительные черты. При Сталине демократия считалась ситуация, когда *все в стране, особенно чиновники государственные служат интересам народа*. Сейчас демократией считается ситуация, когда Центризбирком объявляет нам начальников в стране.³⁴
- (Show 1)

Mr Mukhin's qualification of the Stalin period as a 'democracy' reminds us of Theo van Leeuwen's notion of recontextualization, explained as a situation in which discourses describe the same social practice in a number of different ways depending on the habitus of the speaker (2008: 22, 86). Talking about Stalinism, Mukhin avoids an apparent ventriloquation of the discourse with markers of the communist variety. Instead, he uses substitution which is a prominent strategy of recontextualization (ibid.: 17). The term *демократия* [democracy] is perceived as a central notion of contemporary public discursive habitus, so in order to justify Stalinism, Mukhin replaces Stalinist language with one bearing a post-communist flavour. This allows him, using the *topos* of comparison, to bracket both regimes within the same progressive category of 'democracy'. Furthermore, by glossing the 'democracy' of Stalin's era as the system in which 'everybody in the country, especially state officials, serves the interests of the people', he normalizes Stalinism as a legitimate democracy, as opposed to the false democracy which he attributes to Putin's Russia.

In contrast to other 'Stalinists', Mukhin's use of substitution rather than borrowing might seem paradoxical. However his deployment of recontextualization turns out to be a clever tool enabling him to suppress the contradiction between the meaning potentials of different, past and present, discourses (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 119), and to put forward post-Soviet language, together with its markers of modernity, as instrumental for reframing and, consequently, ameliorating, the knowledge frames of Stalinism.

In examples (15)–(17), strategies of recontextualization and substitution are used by other participants in the shows. In (15), the anchor recontextualizes

Stalin's rule by rephrasing it, in the contemporary middle class vocabulary, as *авторский проект* [auteur project]. In (16), the already familiar to us Mr Kurginian uses the term fashionable during Dmitrii Medvedev's presidency, *модернизация* [modernization], as a substitute notion for 'totalitarian regime'. In (17), Prokhanov employs the markedly contemporary, post-Soviet foreignism *хай-тек* [high-tech] to continue praising achievements of the Stalin period.

- (15) ANCHOR: Юрий Игнатьевич, а ... что скажете, тезис такой, что по сути Россия сталинской эпохи – *это авторский проект*, который ... который со смертью автора перестал функционировать?³⁵

(Show 1)

- (16) KURGINIAN: Вот вы говорите *модернизация*, что при Сталине не было *модернизации*? ... Что, не бывает авторитарных *модернизаций*?³⁶

(Show 3)

- (17) PROKHANOV: За эти время, это время, десталинизируя нас ... был уничтожен огромный потенциал великой экономики, военно-промышленный комплекс с колоссальными количествами э ... *хай-теков*.³⁷

(Show 2)

Since these three excerpts contain no linguistic trigger to unfold the communist doxic knowledge frames, it may look as if ideological memories have faded. But the strategies of recontextualization and substitution of the ventriloquized Soviet language with positively nuanced, contemporary, fashionable expressions ensure that new mythologies are taking over the baton and making totalitarian meanings palatable for the new generation. It appears that despite the application of distancing metalinguistic strategy towards the units of communist variety there are various ways explored by the speakers for the transmission of the knowledge frames from the totalitarian past.

Conclusion

Both sets of data, the diachronic development of V-Day narrative and the synchronic debates about Stalin, demonstrate that contemporary public discourse about the national past is increasingly oriented towards the communist linguistic variety. Whether the speakers copy, approximate, contrast, or indeed avoid the elements of Soviet authoritative language, linguistic choices of participants have a reflexive dimension, relying on the internalized knowledge of the totalitarian language. Although linguistic mnemonics often take a form of ventriloquation in many contexts in which the communist past is narrated, it is difficult to uniformly establish a direct link between the elements marked as communist variety being embedded in the utterances and an expressed sympathy towards the Soviet

regime, as the language, the metalanguage and the articulation of knowledge frames find subtler ways of mutual calibration.

Either borrowing from the communist parlance or avoiding it, speakers seem to display agency and control over it as they display a variety of types of ventriloquation, while ‘poisonous’ senses (to recall Klemperer’s terminology) may shift forms and be transported to contemporary domains. Finally, examples of the linguistic negotiation of the communist variety also demonstrate that the contemporary discourse about the past, having moved away from both the Soviet orthodoxy and having gone through the mills of the heretic post-Soviet orders of discourse, continues to be suspended between the past and the future, still struggling to create the status quo of the present.³⁸

Notes

- 1 It has to be noted however that communist language continued to exist in the 1990s within the ‘oppositional’ communist and nationalist discourse (see, for example, Kakorina 1996; Kukulin in this volume).
- 2 Observations point to the fact that the negotiation of linguistic memories of the communist ways of expression is not limited to Russia alone and presents a contemporary feature in many post-communist societies (Andrews 2011).
- 3 Teun van Dijk stresses the primary role of the media in the construction of the dominant discursive consensus (1987: 40).
- 4 See, for example, Slavoj Žižek (2008: 4) who, following Jacques Lacan, talks about the ‘dark’ and ‘torturing’ side of language accounting for the ‘irremediable gap between subject and language’.
- 5 Bakhtin’s ‘voice’ is similar to Erving Goffman’s notion of ‘footing’ by which he understands the ‘changes in alignment we take up to ourselves and others’ (1981: 126) that indicate ‘the relationship of the speaker to the act of speaking’ (Woolard 2004: 86). Code switching is the most prominent signalling device for shifting of footing.
- 6 As of January 2014, the print run of *Moskovskii Komsomolets* is reported as 750,000, see <http://psrnmk.agency-siam.ru/> (accessed 29 January 2014).
- 7 There has been a growing amount of literature on Russian post-Soviet memory and celebratory practices and politics of history related to the Victory in the Second World War, for an overview, see, for example, Kirschenbaum 2011.
- 8 Well, my good brothers, the good gentlemen, new Russians, old Russians, citizens of Russia, and everybody, everybody, everybody living on this earth! The brightest holiday arrives.
- 9 Congratulations on the Victory Day, comrades!
- 10 Cf. examples in Russian National Corpus: Снеточков жареных, господа хорошие, с лучком пожарю ... за три копейки сковородка! (‘Here are fried smelt, good gentlemen, I’ll fry them for you with onions ... for three kopecks a pan.’ [I. Shmelev, *Pilgrimage*, 1930–1931]); Господа хорошие, пожаловаться не могу; жалостливые тоже и всякую животную любят и жалеют не меньше моего (‘Good gentlemen, I can’t complain, those who have pity, love every beastie and pity them no less than me.’ [A. Kokoshko, ‘Stories from the criminal world of the Tsarist Russia (1928)’) (Natsional’nyi korpus).
- 11 Cf. examples that point to these contexts:

Все в руке Божей вздохнул Слава, осторожно вдевая самодельную вешалку в рукава малинового пиджака ‘а-ля *новый русский*’ [Everything is in God’s will, – Slava sighed and inserted a self-made coat hanger into the sleeves of his crimson jacket à la new Russian.] (Andrei Rubanov, *Plant and it will Grow*, 2005)

И тут же рассказала ей дурацкий, сомнительного остроумия анекдот, запечатанный мною еще в начале развала-передела: ‘Решил новый русский съездить на Украину.’ [And instantly I told her a stupid joke of a questionable wit, which I stuck in my memory from the start of the break down and division: ‘Once a new Russian decided to go to Ukraine...’, [Tat’ana Salamatina, *My Odessian language*, 2011]].

(Natsional’nyi korpus)

- 12 Cf. Столбы, заборы, стены были сплошь уклеены плакатами, декретами и воззваниями к трудящимся народам всего мира. Всем, всем, всем! Читай и слушай. [Telegraph poles, fences and walls were all covered by the posters, decrees and appeals to the workers of the world: To everybody, everybody, everybody! Read and listen.] (A. Veselyi, *Russia Washed Clean by Blood*, 1924–1932) (Natsional’nyi korpus).
- 13 Но когда все около нас радуется или почитается радующемся, торжествуя день какого-нибудь общего праздника..., каково Рождество, Новый год, Светлая Пасха, – когда мы собирались, готовились участвовать в общей радости, – и вдруг непредвиденная печаль омрачит наше сердце ... [But when everything around us is joyful or is deemed to be joyful as they celebrate a day of some shared fête ... such as Christmas, New Year, The Bright Easter – when we were preparing for taking part in everyone’s joy, – suddenly an unexpected sadness would descend on my heart ...] (E. Rastopchina, *A Happy Woman*, 1851) (Natsional’nyi korpus).
- 14 Bormann was sleeping peacefully. Suddenly somebody insistently knocked on his door. Bormann saw a man in a trench coat, felt boots, a cavalry hat and with a Kalashnikov behind his back. The man whispered [a password]:
 - Elephants are walking to the north!
 - Elephants are walking up your arse, and, by the way, Stierliz lives one floor up, – bellowed Bormann.
- 15 In the battlefields around Moscow the bright victorious pages in the history of the Great Patriotic War are written in blood. Memory about our war is sacred; we must not forget at what price in 1941–1945, the peace was won. Our talk with the Governor of the Moscow region, the Hero of the Soviet Union, Boris Gromov is about how the Moscow Region had fought the enemy and about the need to defend today the results of the conquest of our Victory.
- 16 Neither the official trumpets, nor the thunder of military parades, nor the professionally elated voices coming out of the loudspeakers, nor the bursts of fireworks could muffle the human core [of the event] – the ever-lasting pain about the dead, about the broken lives and the millions of those disfigured by the war. For certain there will be many homes where on that day, on the table there will be a vodka shot glass covered with a piece of rye bread – the glass of the victor who had died in a battle or many years later from wounds. But remembering the dead it is wrong to forget about those alive – it is not that many of them that are left. Unfortunately, the lives they live today do not match the glory of the victors.
- 17 This does not necessarily relate to other instantiations of the Victory Day performance in 2010, in which polyphony was more visible. For example, as Stephen Norris (2011) argues, the 2010 Victory celebrations showcased the commodification and commercialization of the Great Patriotic War in Russian culture.
- 18 The term move is used here in the sense of unit in conversation (see, for example, Matthiessen and Slade 2011: 388).
- 19 As early as 6 November 1941 in our newspapers, even not in the front but in the division paper, Stalin’s speech was published in which he said that, well, on 6 November 1941 Germans lost 4.5 million troops. Even at our section of the front, which I know, okay, I do not know all the rest, but it was clear that it was an utter lie.

- 20 Eh, Erofeev is right, at the beginning of the century Russia looked much better than even at the peak of Stalin's victories, in the inverted commas.
- 21 All these construction sites, all these factories, all this is bullshit, all. A human being is the most important.
- 22 In the totalitarian variety, *Сталинские победы* [Stalin victories] was a set phrase, used, among other things, for naming organizations (for example, collective farms), and culture pieces (for example, there was a military march called *Сталинская победа*).
- 23 The National Corpus registers the first occurrences of the word in the 1960s. In 2008, the word's frequency increased 49.4 times (*Natsional'nyi korpus*).
- 24 PROKHANOV: And to your seconder who said a lot of interesting things about Jewish literature of the period of comrade Stalin ... The greatness of Stalin ...
SOLOV'EV: Behave yourself decently ...
PROKHANOV: The greatness of Stalin – while he rests from his tongue tightness – the greatness of Stalin is in the fact that he created a great ...
EROFEEV: well, do not worry so much
PROKHANOV: created a great state, and this state vanquished the world's evil.
- 25 There is a famous decree by comrade Stalin of 13 May 1946.
- 26 Stalin was a leader. This is not a secret. All good people will remember this all their lives about wise, dearest and beloved Stalin.
- 27 The stanza that the show participant cites reads:

От края до края, по горным вершинам
Где горный орел совершает полет,
О Сталине мудром, родном и любимом
Прекрасную песню слагает народ.

(Pesni 1952)

[Across the expanses, across the mountain ranges
Above which a mountain eagle is flying high
People are creating a beautiful song
About wise, dearest and beloved Stalin.]

- 28 Well, as we said before, this was not under Stalin but under Khrushchev, and that was Soviet people, and the question would always go: what kind of people? – The Soviet people, how can they be anything else. Well, after that, the question goes, under whose leadership? – Under the leadership of the Communist Party. It was clear.
- 29 Mariëtta Chudakova talks about the importance of mechanical memorizing of the Soviet language, noting that words in the Soviet language narrowed down into fixed idiomaticism which 'were learned (memorized) and used only in set collocations' (Chudakova 2007: 161 translation my own).
- 30 Cf.: Никакому флоту противника к Ленинграду не прорваться.... А в Кронштадте и в Ленинграде – весь *сталинский* Балтийский флот. [No enemy fleet can get through ... All Stalinist Baltic fleet is in Kronshtadt and Leningrad.] (Viktor Suvorov, *The Shadow of Victory*) (*Natsional'nyi korpus*).
- 31 PROKHANOV: In effect, this generation, this elite that lives now in this unfortunate country and enjoys the residue of the goodness created by Stalin. We have finished up consuming Stalin's heritage, all these years we have been consuming Stalin's railroads, Stalin's outer space ...
EROFEEV: This is delirious ...
P: Stalin's machines, Stalin's fleet ...
E: This is delirious, about outer space is delirious ...
P: and agriculture.
- 32 This expression relates to the sequence of Soviet victories in ten crucial battles of the Second World War.

A budget. In this short word
 There is nothing miraculous.
 But it will light up with the magical glow
 When we say 'Stalinist budget'.

- 34 There was democracy under Stalin and today it is also considered to be democracy. However under Stalin there were specific features. Under Stalin, the situation was considered as democracy when everybody in the country, especially state officials, serves the interests of the people. Now the situation is counted as democracy when the Central Election Committee announces for us the country's bosses.
- 35 Iurii Ignat'evich, well ... what would you say to the argument that in effect, Russia of the Stalin epoch is an auteur project, which after the death of the author ceased to exist?
- 36 You say modernization, don't you, but was there no modernization under Stalin? Can't authoritarian modernizations exist?
- 37 Over all this time while they destalinized us, they destroyed an enormous potential of the great economy, the military-industrial complex with a huge amount of eh ... high-tech.
- 38 At the time when this chapter was being finalized, the recent events of Russia's involvement in the Ukrainian crisis and annexation of Crimea had raised the stakes for Russian patriotic narrative which has displayed a type of rhetoric with an intensified reliance on the linguistic mnemonics of the communist variety. Specialists have been increasingly talking about a totalitarian flavour in this discourse (Iampol'skii 2014; Morozov 2014a, 2014b; Rubinshtein 2014; Ryazanova-Clarke 2014b).

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9 ‘The golden age of Soviet Antiquity’

Sovietisms in the discourse of left-wing political movements in post-Soviet Russia, 1991–2013

Ilya Kukulin

‘Underground’ reappropriation as a special regime of the use of Soviet political language

In his 1979 novel *The Island of Crimea*, Vasilii Aksenov described an imaginary, utopian Russia such as it might have become were it not for the Bolshevik coup of October 1917. In the novel, a corner of liberal, technocratic Russia has been preserved in (or on) the Crimea. Crimea has been reimagined by the author as an island, not a peninsula, and as what amounts to a separate state, independent of the Soviet Union, rather like Taiwan after it became politically independent from mainland Communist China in 1949.

In Aksenov’s fictional Crimea, the kind of slogans that had already become tired clichés for Soviet citizens by the 1970s are starting to be regarded as fashionable counter-cultural gestures, in much the same way that quotations from Mao Tse-tung or his wife Jiang Qing were being used by radical intellectuals in France the late 1960s and early 1970s. There is clearly a nod to this aspect of French life in Aksenov’s description of how his hero, Andrei Luchnikov, travels into work in the morning:

The herd of cars, and Luchnikov’s ‘Peter-Turbo’ with it, was drawn into the underground plexus, a network of tunnels, a huge junction from which cars exited at high speed at the various junctions for the Crimean freeways. At the mouth of the tunnel, the traffic moved slowly enough to enable drivers to read slogans written in large letters on the concrete entrance arch. Youth organizations from the capital [of Crimea – that is, Simferopol] took advantage of this fact, activists would let themselves down on ropes [from the upper road] and paint their party political slogans, symbols and caricatures on the concrete in bright colours [...]. Now, as he drove out of the eastern exit, Luchnikov watched with a grin as a young enthusiast, hanging like a spider in the middle of the wall, worked on the final letters of the slogan: COMMUNISM IS THE BRIGHT FUTURE FOR ALL MANKIND, painting over the Technicolor insights of the previous day in red paint.

(Aksenov 1981: 10–11)

Present-day Russia is a long way in spirit from the democratic island of Aksenov's novel.¹ The political elite of today sees itself not only as the lawful successor of the Soviet regime, but also as its political successor. Many of the government's opponents consider these claims false: insisting that the current system of power is an inescapable continuation of the revolution of 1991, which was anti-Communist in spirit. Meanwhile, Communists in Russia today see the 1991 revolution as a counter-revolution, which destroyed what they consider to be the positive results of the events of 1917. Consequently, both camps – the authorities, in the shape of the United Russia party and the political establishment; and the non-liberal opposition, from left-wing radicals to 'neo-Imperialists' who sing Stalin's praises – make equal use of the political slogans and ideologemes which became embodied in the language of the 1920s to the 1970s in order to give themselves legitimacy, considerably re-signifying these in the process.

In modern Russian public discourse, the use of such slogans and ideologemes implies that the speaker wishes to establish – either implicitly or explicitly – a virtual historical connection with the Soviet era. If we take into account not only political movements but the Russian public sphere as a whole we can, roughly speaking, identify three ways in which this type of linguistic 'appeal to the past' is used:

- 1 in ironic quotations, in which the Soviet ideologeme features either as a semantically empty unit or a tool for manipulating audiences;²
- 2 in an attempt to establish an illusory continuity between the modern political establishment and the Soviet elite and likewise with the latter's 'achievements', familiar from Soviet propaganda;
- 3 as the language of opposition and sedition, as the incidental character in Aksenov's novel uses it.

With this third use of the language we are seeing quite an extraordinary phenomenon which will be the subject of this chapter: the Soviet language, which is by its very nature repressive and geared towards universalization (Zemtsov 1985: 10; Khan-Pira 1991; Guseinov 2004: 16–37; Chudakova 2007: 251–330), can, nowadays be used as an element in westernizing rhetoric or in rhetoric promoting the defence of human rights. And this in spite of the fact that in the latter years of the Soviet Union, westernizing attitudes were ideologically suspect and it was considered a crime or a symptom of mental illness to try to protect of the rights of Soviet citizens against the arbitrary actions of the state.

The following is a fairly typical example of such a 're-signification'. On 4 November 2008, on a 'Unity Day' rally of the United Russia Party in Orenburg, Elena Pavliuk and Irina Fadeeva, Russian activists of the Union of Communist Youth (SKM)³ distributed anonymous pamphlets beginning with the following words:

Единая Россия – это не политическая партия, это сборище денежных мешков, пролезших во власть, используя административный ресурс. Она

монополизировала законодательную власть в стране и принимает один за другим антинародные законы. Эти законы подавляют гражданскую активность населения, закрепляют социальное неравенство и просто грабят народ.

Стараниями господ-единорогов Российская Федерация превратилась в тоталитарно-бюрократическое государство с необязательной для исполнения Конституцией.

(Chernyi 2008)⁴

Clearly, in this pamphlet, as in many other examples of ‘spontaneous’ non-reflective political speech in the post-Soviet period, several different ideologized discourses clash with one another. In this case, there are at least four:

- 1 Universally understood euphemisms of the 2000s, taken from the jargon of post-Soviet political pundits and spin-doctors, for example, *административный ресурс* [the administrative resource]. Most often, *использование административного ресурса* [use of the administrative resource] refers to electoral fraud or illegal manipulation of the judicial process, under the direct order of federal or local leaders.
- 2 The language of the Soviet political economy relating to capitalism, for example: *монополизировала (законодательную власть)* [monopolized (the country’s legislative power)], *закрепляют социальное неравенство* [[they] reinforce social inequality].
- 3 The pejorative ‘hate speech’ of Soviet newspapers, which depicted details of life in capitalist countries in a sharply negative manner, for example: *антинародные законы* [anti-popular laws], *сборище денежных мешков* [crowd of fat cats], *пролезших во власть* [who wormed their way into power], *просто грабят народ* [they, quite simply, rob the people]. The word *антинародный* acts here not as a meaningful lexeme, but primarily as an instrument of ideological demonization: an anti-popular act, according to the rules of Soviet discourse, is something manifestly bad in principle, from beginning to end (see, for example, Zemtsov 1985; Chudakova 2007).⁵
- 4 the language of the liberal opposition media, for example: *тоталитарно-бюрократическое государство* [the totalitarian bureaucratic state]; *подавляют гражданскую активность* [they suppress the civil activity]; as well as the appeal to the ‘bourgeois’ Constitution.

The authors of this pamphlet call the party United Russia, *оккупационная* [an occupying (party)], just as the Russian Communists and nationalists of the 1990s called Boris Yeltsin’s administration *оккупационный режим* [an occupying regime]. But at the same time, the same anonymous authors (probably Pavliuk and Fadeeva) appeal to the Constitution adopted by Russia after the collapse of Soviet power, in 1993. The young radical left wing appears here both as successor to the Soviet communists and at the same time (albeit unwittingly) successor to the anti-Communist dissidents who promoted the slogan ‘Observe your

country's Constitution!' In general, this pamphlet incorporates the rhetoric of the Soviet state, unquestionably totalitarian in nature,⁶ into the expression of an anti-authoritarian position: a challenge to the claims of the United Russia party to an ideological and political monopoly.

Historically, such an inversion of Soviet rhetoric is nothing new. Even underground opposition groups and youth clubs in the 1940–1950s, as far as can be judged by the few surviving documents, used Soviet and even specifically Stalinist rhetoric to express demands for social justice and protests against the repressive character of the Soviet regime (Markasova 2008; Fürst 2010). This language 'reappropriation' was the work of people who had grown up under Soviet rule and had almost no knowledge of any other political language. In addition, such an ideological inversion was possible because of the specific nature of Soviet propaganda. In the Soviet Union, a discourse related to revolution and clandestine political campaigning became the officially adopted language of a highly conservative, sanctimonious and hypocritical society. In a survey of school children in Uzbekistan in the second half of the 1940s, the children's favourite heroes – after Lenin and Stalin, naturally – were the characters of Aleksandr Fadeev's novel *The Young Guard* (Krasnobaev 1948). It is quite possible that the results of the poll were genuine. For all that, they are somewhat paradoxical: in a state where arrests on trumped-up charges of conspiracy and underground subversion were taking place daily, young people were choosing underground activists (albeit activists operating in enemy territory) as their idols.

In the 1950s–1960s, the opposition in the Soviet Union increasingly developed its own political language, though this was rather eclectic in character. Soviet clichés began to be less frequently used in its texts. Some non-conformist authors, such as Revolt Pimenov, and Valery Ronkin, who studied the texts of classics of Marxism–Leninism, historicized the Soviet language of propaganda and began to reflect on it and re-evaluate it. For instance, after the Soviet invasion of Hungary in November 1956, Pimenov (then a young Leningrad mathematician, later a famous scientist and human rights activist) wrote to all the deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR demanding consistence between his country's foreign policy and its officially proclaimed ideology:

Уважаемый товарищ депутат такой-то! До сих пор в нашей печати правительство, *опирающееся на иностранные штыки*, называлось *марионеточным правительством*, а сами эти *иностранные штыки* назывались *штыками интервентов*. Сейчас в Венгрии правительство опирается на советские штыки, как видно даже из советских сообщений, а советская армия там *ведет войну против части венгерского народа*. Для того, чтобы у советского народа и иностранцев не сложилось мнения, будто венгерское правительство является *марионеточным*, а Советский Союз *интервентом*, с целью сохранения престижа Советского Союза, я прошу Вас на ближайшей же сессии Верховного Совета потребовать от Советского правительства вывода советских войск из Венгрии. Кроме того, я прошу Вас потребовать

принятия закона, чтобы в дальнейшем такое использование советских войск за границей не допускалось без специальной санкции Верховного Совета либо Президиума Верховного Совета.

(reprinted in Pimenov 1979: 169–170)⁷

The 1950s and 1960s also saw the formation of the Communard Youth Movement (under the ideological and practical leadership of Igor' Ivanov). The members of this movement aspired to make Soviet revolutionary slogans a reality in a utopian society. In so doing, they unexpectedly discovered the subversive potential of Soviet language.⁸ It is significant that members of Ronkin's circle in the 1960s also called themselves 'Communards'. Subsequently, in the 2000s, Ronkin was to refer to himself and all those with similar convictions, as 'having emigrated from real life into Communist exile' (Ronkin 2003: 86).

The left and the imperial Soviet ideologemes

The re-signifying of Sovietisms in the 1970s has been described in detail by Alexey Yurchak (2006) and the dynamics of this process in the post-Soviet period have also been discussed by Gasan Guseinov (2004). The term 'Sovietism' has been established in a number of works (Pikhurova 2005; Kupina 2009), while the characteristics of semantization in Soviet language have been analysed by Marietta Chudakova (2007). However, Chudakova interprets the use of Sovietisms in the post-Soviet era primarily as a political and cultural anachronism, a manifestation of conservatism and nostalgia for the Soviet era, whereas Guseinov sees it as an expression of the postmodern mania for citation and a feature of the chaos that characterizes discourse in a transitional era. But, as we can see, there is another, still unstudied aspect of the use of Sovietisms in the post-Soviet period: attempts to infuse these expressions with fresh political content. This type of 'reconfiguration' has been largely been the work of activists in the post-Soviet left-wing movements.

The words 'left' or 'left-wing' can be used in relation to post-Soviet Russia only with certain reservations. As the journalist Evgenii Ikhlov puts it 'only in Russia can anti-bourgeois supporters of feudal reaction and the restoration of Empire call themselves "left-wing"' (Ikhlov 2013).⁹ It might also be added that only in Russia can nationalists, xenophobes and supporters of an 'organic' concept of society, such as the writer Zakhar Prilepin be considered 'left-wing', on the grounds that they promulgate slogans of social justice (Lipovetskii 2012). In the 2000s and the 2010s, the leadership of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) constantly resorted to aggressive nationalist and xenophobic rhetoric (Kozhevnikova 2004: 82–83; Tupikin and Vainmann 2005; Umland 2007: 392–402; Svicherevskii 2011). While today in Russia there are several influential left-wing groups which consistently maintain an internationalist position (such as the Committee for a Workers' International and the Russian Socialist Movement), there were almost no such groups in the 1990s, with the exception of small groups of anarchists, Trotskyists and the Maoists. As far as

left-wing groups in the first post-Soviet decade are concerned, the organizations Labour Russia and the Russian Communist Workers' Party (RKRP) might be tentatively included in this category. Although these organizations did not align themselves with religious fundamentalists as frequently as did the KPRF, and although they were more consistent in championing the interests of disadvantaged groups – albeit using predominantly demagogic rhetoric (Korguniuk and Zaslavskii 1996). They did, nonetheless, frequently employ nationalist, imperialist and anti-Semitic rhetoric. Out of Labour Russia was born the Vanguard of the Red Youth movement, members of which subsequently participated in the creation of the Left Front.

Vlad Tupikin and Ute Weinmann have given an accurate description of one characteristic feature of the political thinking shared by all these groups before the establishment of a second generation of youth groups in the late 2000s:

The majority of so-called Russian left-wingers base their position above all on the Soviet legacy. 'Leftism' [in Russia] is a mixture of Soviet state patriotism (shading into imperialism) xenophobia [...] and opportunism regarding the modern capitalist state, [...]. The internal structures of most 'Communist' organizations are profoundly authoritarian and their proposed methods for transforming society are sometimes super-authoritarian [...]. The Soviet past provides not only an ideological justification for a possible amalgamation of the left and right wing (in Soviet state patriotism) but also the first attempts to structure such an amalgamation.

(Tupikin and Vainmann 2005)¹⁰

The language used by the so-called 'red-brown' (radical communist-nationalist) movement of the 1990s also corresponded to this political orientation.

The quasi-magical character of Soviet language and public politics of the 1990s

In post-Soviet Russia, the Communists like the Russian Communist Workers Party, have felt – and continue to feel – that they are surrounded by a hostile 'enemy' environment. They try to use Soviet language in an 'underground' fashion, in the way it was used, for instance, in secretly printed pamphlets distributed on Nazi-occupied Soviet territory. However, this 'partisan' model is imitational for more reasons than one. In the first place, although Russia has a new social system, it is not occupied by any foreign power. The left wing in Russia today has been integrated into the new social order to a much greater extent than the anti-fascist Young Guard organization was ever incorporated into the social structures of the city of Krasnodon when it was occupied by the Nazis, for instance. Second, over the course of several decades – both under Soviet power and after – the Soviet discourse had been subjected to various kinds of erosion (Yurchak 2006: 77–157), and its present-day 'users' are dealing with versions which have been repeatedly re-semanticized. Third, in the last few years, left-wing groups have increasingly

entered into political coalitions with liberal and moderate-conservative opposition political movements and promoted common political demands, such as the release of political prisoners (Samedova 2012; Novikov 2013). As a result of these factors, the use of Soviet language in the rhetoric of the left has undergone various semantic mutations and hybridizations.

These changes are of particular interest because the Soviet political language is fundamentally different from all types of non-totalitarian discourse: it had a quasi-magical quality, and was, as Marietta Chudakova puts it, 'weapon-like'. Chudakova defines this quality using a metaphor, arguing that certain key ideological words 'were used to defend oneself and to attack: this was like a key or, rather, a *pass-key*' (Chudakova 2007: 274).¹¹ Speaking less metaphorically, elements of the Soviet language carried a rigidly fixed set of ideological and emotional judgements which implicitly referred to certain higher authorities. In the case of the USSR these higher authorities were the idea of progress and the course of history. Sovietisms, or quotations from the classics of Marxism–Leninism, used in a public speech, performatively depicted the appropriation of historical rectitude. A statement of loyalty under Soviet conditions was more than just an agreement with publicly declared norms. According to Soviet ideology, by making such an agreement, a speaker would enter the circle of those who were 'historically right'. The ideological centre of this circle was the Communist Party. Even in the years before the revolution it had become a trademark of the party to present the Bolshevik leadership as the embodiment of historical progress.

Such a 'performance of historical rectitude' could be either condoned or challenged by the actual commanding authorities. In his account of the public vilification of 'cosmopolitan' theatre critics in the Soviet Union in 1949, a well-known theatre critic, Konstantin Rudnitskii tells of how one of the accused, Iuzef Iuzovskii, made a speech in his own defence and was met by a harsh reaction from the Stalinist literary official Arkady Perventsev:

Iuz, looking like a small Cyrano de Bergerac, thin with an improbably enormous hooked nose, was drowned by the rostrum. All that could be seen was his pale face, and glimpses of his beautiful hands. He spoke with his usual slight arrogance, as people do who are used to others hanging on and relishing their every word. [...] At some point, in relation to something or other, he made a reference to Lenin. A loud bark came from the table of the presidium where the leaders sat:

– Don't blaspheme, you pygmy!

They didn't let Iuzovskii finish speaking.

(Rudnitskii 1990: 451)

A priori historical rectitude was what was at stake for all those who used, whether they did so in order to strengthen the ruling regime or to contest its legitimacy. Any attempt to reflect on or historicize Soviet clichés indicated – as it still can today – a refusal to regard this historical rectitude as absolute. Soviet

clichés were signs of authoritative speech. Nowadays, their use is tinged with irony, or with a darkly serious allusion to that automatic authority that the language commanded for so long. Soviet public utterances drew their weight from two interrelated factors: the potential of a speaker to draw on the support of the state machinery of violence, and the performance of historical rectitude mentioned above. These factors meant that the Soviet language worked rather like the language of magic charms.

Today, the hybridization of Soviet discourse with other political languages demonstrates what might be called the 'individualization' of appeals to historical rectitude and a change in the semantics of such appeals. For part of the Russian left-wing of the generation of the 2000s, historical rectitude is no longer equated with any specific party.

The evolution of re-signified Soviet language within the public discourse of the post-Soviet left is the result of generational change. Those who came of age under the Soviet regime used and continue to use Soviet clichés as markers of self-evidently authoritative speech, but for those who came of age in 1990 onwards, such clichés are used like quotes from a foreign language or at least, expressions with a non-intuitive social and cultural status that requires further definition. Thus, Soviet clichés in the public speech of the current opposition continue to undergo erosion.

In the 1990s, the ideological leaders of the left (I should stress once again that the word is used only tentatively) were people who had come of age in the Soviet era and had learned the official language from their youth: Viktor Anpilov (born 1945); Victor Tiul'kin (born 1951); and Boris Gun'ko (1933–2006). None of these was a member of the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, unlike, for instance, the current leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation Gennady Ziuganov (born 1944), who had become deputy head of the Ideological Department of the CPSU in 1990, and Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the RSFSR in 1991. Not one of these was an official ideologist, with the authority to change the meaning of Sovietisms to correspond with the new political direction. To use a metaphor from computing, none of these men were 'programmers' of the Soviet political language; they were all 'advanced users'. Viktor Anpilov was an international journalist and in the final years before the collapse of the Soviet Union he worked at a state radio and television company Gosteleradio; Tiul'kin was Secretary of the Party Committee of the *Avangard* Leningrad research and manufacturing association and a member of the Leningrad Regional Committee of the CPSU (for a young man, by Soviet standards, this was an important post, but not still not comparable with Ziuganov's in importance). Gun'ko was a chemical engineer and a lecturer with the *Znanie* ('Knowledge') education society, who went into politics and joined the Bolshevik platform of the CPSU. All these men used Sovietisms in approximately the same way as they were used by many so-called 'truth-seekers' and whistle-blowers of that time, who were demanding that those in charge of the government or the administration of business take remedial action in the organizations for which they worked.

The ideologues of this type, however, differed from the Soviet ‘truth-seekers’ in that, for all of them, there was a very significant connection between the ‘correct’ use of Soviet discourse and subsequent violence. In the post-Soviet era, for many on the left, nostalgic for the Soviet system, the clichés of official propaganda were used to legitimize and justify aggression – including physical violence. For example, in the days of the constitutional crisis in October 1993 a pamphlet was circulated in Moscow bearing a poem by Boris Gun’ko:

ТОВАРИЩ! Мольбами слезными
 буржуя с толку не сбить.
 Хочешь добиться серьезного –
 НАДО БУРЖУЯ БИТЬ!
 Хватит словесные кружева
 из страха и лжи плести!
 ТОЛЬКО
 СВЯТОЕ
 МУЖЕСТВО
 МОЖЕТ
 СТРАНУ
 СПАСТИ!
 Вновь Александра Матросова
 РОДИНА В БОЙ ЗОВЕТ!
 Преданный,
 проданный,
 брошенный
 СТАЛИНА ЖДЕТ НАРОД!

(Gun’ko 1996)¹²

This poem, like the other pamphlet quoted above, is a discursive collage. *Родина в бой зовет!* [the Motherland into battle is calling] is a slightly distorted version of the 1941 slogan *Родина-мать зовет!* [The Motherland is calling!]. *Надо буржуя бить!* [we must beat the bourgeois!] is an appeal in the spirit of the revolutionary rhetoric of the Russian civil war, recorded by witnesses and in memoirs in slogans such as: *Бей буржуев, грабь награбленное!* [Beat the bourgeois, rob the robbers!]; or *Бей жидов и буржуев!* [Beat the Yids and the bourgeois!].¹³ *Сталина ждет народ* [The people wait for Stalin] is not actually a slogan of the Soviet but of the post-Soviet era, when publicists of various political tendencies were arguing that the Russian people were supposedly ‘longing for a strong hand’. The expression *преданный, проданный, брошенный* [betrayed, sold, abandoned] is almost certainly an unconscious recollection of the 1921 poem by Anna Akhmatova *Everything has been plundered, betrayed, sold...*, which is actually about the tragic consequences of the Bolshevik revolution.

There have been repeated attempts to alter this neo-Soviet language in left-wing movements. Among those who made such attempts were the left-wing

political analyst Boris Kagarlitsky, who has sought to 'intellectualize' Communist rhetoric and combine it with the discourse of the Western European anti-globalization movement (see for example, Kagarlitskii 1997, 2002), and Eduard Limonov, whose views are a bizarre blend of radical nationalism and anarchism with touches of imperialist rhetoric and the rhetoric of human rights activists (see for example Limonov 2005). However, these attempts have had very little impact, because the post-Soviet left-wing movement, unlike the political 'left' in Western Europe, has never been particularly focused on the protection of the rights of the poor, migrants and other socially deprived groups. It has, instead been characterized by paternalistic rhetoric and by calls for the immediate reinstatement of the Soviet Union with its system of social guarantees – which, it should be remembered, were, in many ways, fictitious.

The second generation of the post-Soviet left: Soviet ideologemes as technocratic rhetoric

In the 2000s, a new generation of people began to enter the left-wing movement, young people who had not learned Soviet language from childhood, but who had learned about it from books, and who had no actual experience of the social position of the 'truth-seekers' and whistle-blowers, who used Soviet rhetoric in order to bring about a quasi-magical defeat of their superiors. It was the new leader of the Komsomol, Igor Maliarov (1965–2003), who became the figure who marked the boundary between these two generations. At the beginning of the 1990s he took part in the acts of violence initiated by communists in Moscow, including the failed coup during the constitutional crisis on 1993. Later on he called on his comrades to concentrate on grass-root work and raise social issues in emphatically Soviet language: 'Сегодня одним словом, одним знаменам, одним лозунгам веры не будет. Сегодня будет вера реальным делам, реальным крупицам опыта, где мы стараемся защитить молодежь. И тогда люди поверят и нашим ценностям.'¹⁴ (cited in Polinovskaia 2007).

The secondary nature of the Soviet language in the younger left-wing generation led to a gradual change in the way that it was used even in the speeches of Russian Communist Workers Party (RKRP) activists. A text by Artiom Buslaev can be used to illustrate this. Buslaev (born 1978) is a physicist, politician and public activist, most famous for his vociferous anti-clerical activities: he speaks frequently at rallies against the construction of new Orthodox churches in Moscow and takes part in debates with Christians on various Internet forums.

Buslaev came of age politically in the 1990s, he graduated from high school in 1995, and from the Physics Faculty of Moscow University in 2001. He is a member of the group called the Russian Communist Workers' Party in the CPSU. This party, which is Stalinist in spirit, pledges in its literature to bring about a revolution and nationalize all the country's industry and banks. However, while a member of this political sect, Buslaev has also taken part in general opposition activities together with the Liberals and the nationalists, primarily in campaigns for the protection of the Khimki forest near Moscow (Dobson 2011).

The entries in his blog *kcooss.livejournal.com* demonstrate a new type of stylistic and ideological hybridization, different from that seen in Anpilov's speeches or Gun'ko's poems.

On 26 January 2012 Buslaev published a blog entry entitled 'Who are the "workers" Putin is relying on?' This article incorporated a number of incompatible styles of argumentation into a single discourse. The following extract from it demonstrates the diversity of Buslaev's text:

Каким именно рабочим выгодно правление Путина? [...] Взять тот же Уралвагонзавод. [...] Основная продукция этого завода – танки. [...] Почти все они идут на экспорт. И поэтому работники Уралвагонзавода [...] работают не на Россию, а на другие страны. И зарплату за свою работу получают, по сути, из рук иностранных заказчиков (точнее, что не лучше – из денег российских налогоплательщиков, которые эти иностранные заказчики получили в качестве кредитов на закупку оружия). [...]

На встрече [...] в Кузбассе Путин пообещал шахтерам [...] повысить добычу угля на 30%, и, если верить проправительственным СМИ, то все шахтеры в ответ на это дружно выступили в поддержку Путина. [...]

Уголь – это самое экологически грязное топливо, и при этом энергетически невыгодное. Кроме того, уголь – это самый травмоопасный вид энергетики. [...] Обещать шахтерам такое – это значит обещать им сохранять и усугублять отставание от цивилизованных стран. [...]

Каждый [...] [наш] митинг должен заканчиваться созданием организованной структуры из людей, которые будут готовы продолжать борьбу за установление рабочей, советской власти.¹⁵

(Buslaev 2012)

In this text, the Soviet rhetoric is used at the most important point, in the pathos-filled final words. But in everything that precedes it, Buslaev uses sound economic reasoning of a rather liberal nature. Consider, for example, the word *налогоплательщики* [taxpayers], which did not exist in the Soviet language and the reference to the example of *цивилизованные страны* [civilized countries], which is pro-Western in spirit. The reader of this text is confronted by two conflicting political objectives, portrayed as a single whole: 'the establishment of a workers' Soviet power' and the modernization of the economy, in order to overcome the lag behind 'civilized countries', where there is no such thing as Soviet power. Historically, there is a precedent for such an amalgamation in the rhetoric of the Bolsheviks during the 1920s, when Soviet Communists declared that the building of socialism was the fastest way to modernize the country; however, Buslaev is appealing to the experience of modern capitalist countries which have not seen revolution during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Buslaev's lack of awareness of the contradictions in his text can only be explained by the fact that he expresses his higher values in one language – the Soviet language, with its quasi-magical qualities, and his practical everyday concerns in another

language: that of technical and economic rationalism, or, to use the term from the sociology of Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot (2006), in the logic of the scientific and technical world.

In linking Soviet discourse with rational discourse, Buslaev is markedly different from Anpilov or Gun'ko, who link it with irrational types of utterance – particularly religious utterances, for which purpose classic Soviet language, with its mythologizing metaphors, is much better suited, particularly the version that developed in the latter years of Stalinism, in the 1940s and early 1950s. Here, by way of comparison, is a poem, or to be precise, the words of a song by Boris Gun'ko 'Russians don't surrender!':

И в шеренги становятся россы,
И идут с нами вместе на бой
Саша Невский и Санька Матросов,
И Корчагин, и Дмитрий Донской.
[...]
Перед памятью павших клянусь я:
Не уйдет от возмездия враг.
Всех святых, воссиявших над Русью,
Надо мной развивается флаг.¹⁶

(Gun'ko 1996)

This song links the Soviet slogan *перед памятью павших клянусь я!* [in memory of the fallen I swear] with the word *россы* [Russians, men of *Rus*] used in eighteenth-century Russian political odes of a monarchical character (Kheraskov 1961: 64–67; Kapnist 1973: 243). Here the word *россы* is clearly being associated with the victories of the Russian army and with Second World War propaganda, which often appealed to the victories of the Russian army in the eighteenth century. Such is, for example, the slogan *Бьемся мы здорово, колем отчаянно – внуки Суворова, дети Чапаева* [Splendidly and desperately do we fight – the issue of Suvorov and Chapaev do it all right!] which appeared on a poster by the 'Kukryniksy' cartoon collective in 1941.¹⁷ Characters from the pantheon of Soviet heroes, such as the Second World War heroes Alexandr Matrosov and Nikolai Gastello, along with Dmitry Donskoi, who was canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1988, and Alexandr Nevskii, canonized in the year 1547¹⁸ are, in this poem, included among *всех святых, воссиявших над Русью* [all the saints, who have shone in *Rus*].¹⁹ This collective designation is part of the name of an Orthodox Church festival, *Собор всех святых, в земле Российской просиявших* [the Assembly of all the Saints whose lives have shone in the land of *Rus*], which is celebrated on the second Sunday after the feast of the Holy Trinity. In the same poem Gun'ko has included a slogan in the style of Soviet Second World War propaganda: *Не уйдет от возмездия враг* [The enemy will not escape retribution]. It seems that Gun'ko well remembered that in Soviet war propaganda church rhetoric was widely used, just to recall Stalin's speech on 3 July 1941 calling all the Soviet people to repel the German army

and which started with the ecclesiastical *Братья и сестры* [brothers and sisters] (Stalin 1941). However while the Soviet propaganda used whole set phrases, Gun'ko breaks the clichés into smaller units and re-combines them freely in a kind of bricolage. This crossing over of styles and combinations of stylistically contrasting units result in the image of 'the [red] flag of all saints' – essentially an absurd image. Such bricolages were often employed in the rhetoric of post-Soviet communists.

The second generation of the post-Soviet left: the dialogic regime in the use of Soviet language

The hybridization of Soviet language with rational discourses is typical of the texts of another left-wing activist of the new generation – Sergey Udal'tsov (born 1977). Udal'tsov started out as a demonstrative Stalinist, one of the leaders of the group Vanguard of Red Youth (*Avangard Krasnoi Molodezhi*), the abbreviated name of which in Russian, *AKM*, is a direct allusion to the name of a weapon, being more usually used to refer to a type of Kalashnikov assault rifle. The organization's newspaper was called the *Insurance Shot* [*Kontrol'nyi vystrel*], and all the group's political rhetoric has shown the same aggressive style (Loskutova 2008: 3–36). In 2005, at the Sixth Congress of the *AKM*, the group adopted a policy statement proclaiming:

We take as our example the fighters of the Young Guard; [again Fadeev's heroes are being used as a benchmark! – I.K.], the heroes-members of the Komsomol; Fidel Castro and Che Guevara; the members of the [Italian] Red Brigades and the RAF (Rote Armee Fraktion) [a West German terrorist organization]; the Parisian students of 1968; modern-day protestors against globalization and Communist political prisoners.

(Loskutova 2008: 15)

The emblem of the *AKM* – the abbreviation of the name of the organization and a Kalashnikov submachine gun on the background of a red star, is copied from the emblem of the Rote Armee Fraktion, except that the latter shows a different weapon, the German HK MP5 submachine gun.

The actual activities of the *AKM* 2005–6 did not centre on direct violent clashes with police, as had the activities of the Labour Russia group in the first half of the 1990s but rather on the type of radical, but symbolic actions typical of the spirit of the European far-left: activists would handcuff themselves to each other and block traffic on the streets of Moscow. On 13 October 2005, Udal'tsov threw a glass of water over the ex-Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev publicly blaming him for 'the collapse of the USSR, the betrayal of the [Communist] party and for depriving young people of their future' (Loskutova 2008: 22).

In the latter half of the decade Udal'tsov's rhetoric softened and he became increasingly involved in opposition rallies bringing together leftists, liberals and nationalists. Today, as I write this chapter, Udal'tsov, Coordinator of the Left

Front movement and the Moscow Council of Initiative Groups – is under house arrest and charged with organizing the riots that took place in 6 May 2012; many human rights defenders believe that the accusations against Udal'tsov and other peaceful demonstrators in Moscow amount to politically motivated persecution.²⁰

Journalists writing about Udal'tsov have drawn attention to the 'Soviet' nature of his public rhetoric. Here is an extract from a review by Vladislav Polianskii of a collection of his articles and interviews 'War on Putin!':

The style used by Comrade Udal'tsov, is hardly designed to impress a sophisticated aesthete. Here, for example, is an extract from his article 'Take the bull by the horns': Заняли лидерские позиции в региональном протестном движении наши товарищи-левофронтовцы на Алтае, в Ижевске, Тюмени, Иваново, Калининграде, Оренбурге. Не спят Москва и Питер, подтягиваются сибиряки и волжане. Нашлось достойное место в этой команде и для Авангарда Красной Молодежи (АКМ).²¹ No offence, but this smacks of Soviet officialese. The leader of the young radicals of the twenty-first century needs to write with a little more panache. However..., Udal'tsov is primarily an orator, a speaker and a debater, and not a publicist.

(Polianskii 2013)

Poliansky is quoting an article written by Udal'tsov in the final days of 2008. Besides reporting on party-building, Udal'tsov uses the article to indicate to supporters in other cities who should be brought in to cooperate with left-wing organizations – and here he appears more like a Western European communist or member of the 'new left' more than the ideological and discursive successor to the Soviet Komsomol. For all that, his language remains Soviet in character, particularly his use of the epithets *беспокойные* [restless] and *упорные* [resolute, unremitting, steadfast] so beloved of Soviet propagandists:

Насущная задача левых сил – в каждом городе создать свой Совет, куда придут уволенные рабочие, участники настоящих профсоюзов [то есть независимых, не входящих в проправительственную федерацию ФНПР – И.К.], возмущенные автомобилисты, беспокойные экологи, упорные жилищные активисты и многие другие. И этим следует заниматься изо всех сил, начиная с 1 января 2009 года.²²

(Udal'tsov 2009)

The epithet *беспокойный* [restless] acquired a specific Soviet colouring after 1948, after the appearance of a song by Arkadii Ostrovskii based on a poem by Lev Oshanin *Young Communists – Restless Hearts* (Oshanin 1948). The word *упорный* [resolute, steadfast] was an integral part of the propaganda phrase *упорный труд* [unremitting toil, hard work]. This expression figured, for instance, in a song by Boris Shekhter from the film *Ivan Gudov* (1939), based on

a poem by Alexei Surkov: *Мы дорогу в бессмертье откроем/Богатырским упорным трудом* [We will open the road to immortality/Through the unremitting toil of heroes] (Surkov 1939) and in the phrase *Нам упорный труд знаком* [We are no strangers to hard work] from Aleksandra Pakhmutova's song *The Dream is Calling, Girls*, based on the poem by Grebennikov and Dobronravov (1959). Neither of these words are specifically Soviet, but their combined metaphorical use in a political text reveals the Soviet origins of Udal'tsov's rhetoric.

However, in general, this rhetoric carries a different social and psychological meaning from that of the rhetoric of the speeches and literature of the nationalist left-wing activists who came of political age in the Soviet era. In their language (in full accordance with the Soviet modes of representation) society as a whole is presented as an integral whole, only weakly compartmentalized. As a result, their rhetoric is designed to mobilize, generically, 'all the workers', 'all honest people' and so on. Udal'tsov's language, on the other hand, is designed to encourage the horizontal self-organization of various forces prepared for social protest.

Just before 2010, Udal'tsov moved to a new type of rhetorical rationale. Rather than combining diverse slogans to which he had resorted in previous years, he began to construct his own ideology and discourse. In his interviews and public speeches, Udal'tsov explains on what basis the modern Russian left-wing might cooperate with other political forces. At the same time, the semantic force of the Sovietisms in his speech is gradually 'dissolving', so that these Sovietisms are ceasing to act as quasi-magical spells or as appeals to higher, transpersonal values. The Soviet discourse in his speech is becoming hybridized with the rational language of public policy – left-wing, naturally, but not Soviet in spirit. In a 2012 interview he says:

Now [in Russia] if any sort of revolutionary process is to take place, it will be bourgeois and democratic in character: in favour of fair elections, political reform, a free media and free courts. Clearly, this is not, as yet, a socialist revolution. But I understand that particular stages exist, and we cannot just skip or jump over them. At this stage, a bourgeois democratic revolution is also a step in the direction of progress. It will give us more space, so that the political left, in particular, will then have more opportunity to reach out to people, to explain its programme. If we can persuade people, that's good. Then Socialist change will become possible. [...]

The left-wing movement in contemporary Russia has its fair share of problems. In this country, the left-wing movement has its roots in the Soviet era, it is what is left of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. State paternalism lies at its very core: the State should give us all what we need; in Soviet times, it was good, we got everything we needed from the state, there was stability. That's a nice idea, of course, heartwarming to some, especially people of the older generation, but it isn't forward-looking. [...] In fact, left-wing ideas are based on the idea of self-government and self-organization, not on excessive paternalism.

(Udal'tsov 2012)²³

Left-wing organizations need rhetoric like this precisely in order to be able to form political alliances with more liberal, in their own language, 'bourgeois-democratic' movements. Such left-wing activists in modern Russia who appeal to the idea of 'free space' shared by different political forces could be described as 'dialogic'.

It is not only Udal'tsov who rejects the emphasis placed by the older generation of the Russian left on the Soviet practice of party-building. Several of the websites of left-wing organizations also periodically publish posts by authors calling on supporters to make a radical break with the emphasis on the Soviet past. It is significant that these authors are trying to find new forms of public discourse, even those who position themselves as Stalinists, or 'hardline' communists. The semantic mutation of Sovietisms in these cases is especially noticeable. One blogger who writes under the name *beria55* – having clearly named himself in honour of Stalin's chief of Secret Police Lavrentii Beria – posted on the website of the Union of Communist Youth of the Russian Federation:

Главная наша ошибка – вечная любовь к государству, которого нет. Как дух умершей жены государство прошлого не даёт нам жить дальше. Не дает строить новое, создавать, созидать. Как муж покойной мы хотим лишь возвращения безвозмездной потери и не хотим, не можем искать новую любовь. Мы создаем партии по примеру КПСС, разводим бюрократию, образуем бесчисленное количество комитетов и комиссий, засоряя свои мозги. Мы умиляемся на страны, где ещё теплятся угольки социализма, мы читаем о них, думаем, вместо того, чтобы думать, как улучшить собственное положение. Мы не стремимся соответствовать духу времени – мы стремимся по крупницам воссоздать старое, оживить труп или хотя бы максимально к этому приблизиться. Мы не понимаем, что на дворе новое время, что идёт новая жизнь и люди думают по-другому. Мы – самое дряхлое и устаревшее течение в политике. Даже дряхлее монархистов!²⁴

(*Beria 55* 2013)

In this statement by *beria55*, Soviet, public 'high' style, indicated by the high-flown Sovietism from the 1950s *созидать* [to build, create], is blended with specifically Soviet colloquial language (*разводим бюрократию* [breed bureaucracy]) and with attempts to find new metaphors, accompanied by stylistic glitches: for example, the use of the phrase *безвозмездная потеря* [non-reimbursable loss] to describe a dead person, instead of *безвозвратная потеря* [irreplaceable loss]. The essential feature of the text above is the *historicism* of the language of propaganda impossible within the Soviet public sphere. This type of historicism becomes a typical 'symptom' in the writings of Russian left-wing publicists at the end of the first decade and the beginning of the second decade of this century.

Another example of linguistic positioning of the left wing can be seen in the texts of Vladimir Sakharovskii, a functionary of the Communist Party of the

Russian Federation (KPRF) in the Jewish Autonomous Oblast. Sakharovskii maintains a blog written mostly in formal, official bureaucratic language. However, in 2009 he posted an article on the website of the Russian Union of Communist Youth in which the replication of Soviet propaganda clichés suddenly led into a version of Hegel's historiosophy, a subject by no means trivial for the communist, though Sakharovskii's version is not teleological, as Hegel's is, but rather cyclical:

We have been born into a difficult time. We have a great past behind us. But Lenin, like Robespierre and Tamerlane, is already history: the only difference is in the chronology. The golden age of Soviet Antiquity is far from us now. We are mired in the dark ages [*прозябаем в темных веках*] – in the medievalism [*в средневековье*] of sovereign democracy. We wait joyfully for the day when we will see the first signs of our renaissance. A rejuvenated Dante will appear, and then a new Petrarch! The main thing is – don't give up, comrades!

(Sakharovskii 2009)

Sakharovskii believes that the Soviet past is a vanished 'antiquity' which can be 'reborn' in the future on some new level, just as the humanists of the Italian Renaissance, proclaiming a return to models of ancient Greece, in fact created new cultural forms. Most probably, Sakharovskii takes his enthusiasm for the Renaissance not from Marx,²⁵ Lenin or Stalin (all of whom made little systematic comment on the subject) but from the discourse of Soviet *shestedesiatniki* [people of the Sixties], who believed that the time of their youth – the 1960s – would see the rebirth of the avant garde, of revolutionary modernism and the relative tolerant aesthetic climate of the 1920s (moderate, of course, in comparison with that of the Stalinist era), just as the Renaissance saw the rebirth of a forgotten 'displaced' ancient heritage.

In authentic Bolshevik and later Soviet discourses, expressions such as *прозябать в темных веках* [mired in the dark ages] and (*мрачное*) *средневековье* [(gloomy) medievalism] could not be applied to the Soviet speaker himself, but only to an object situated in other country or another era. Consider the sentence included by Stalin in the editorial for the newspaper *Izvestia* on 9 October 1939: Это возвращает нас к мрачным временам средневековья, когда велись опустошительные религиозные войны во имя уничтожения еретиков и инаковерующих²⁶ (Maksimenkov 2005). Here Stalin is declaring Britain's campaign against Hitler's regime and the ideology of Nazism as 'medieval'. The communist use of the verb *прозябать* [to be mired in, to languish] can be seen in the article by Lenin 'Three sources and three component parts of Marxism': Только философский материализм Маркса указал пролетариату выход из духовного рабства, в котором прозябали донныне все угнетенные классы²⁷ (Lenin 1973 [1913]: 47).

The change in subjectivity reflected by Sakharovskii has the effect of declaring the Soviet language and the age that produced it a thing of the past, although

the speaker might consider himself a defender of Soviet values. His subject views himself as resembling the 'last surviving pagan' in the medieval era. This sort of stoical *ressentiment* is a nod to the discourse of Soviet non-conformist art of the 1960s rather than to the aggressive rhetoric of Communist propagandists: compare, for example, a similar imagery in a poem by dissident Naum Korzhavin *The Last Pagan (A Letter from the 6th Century to the 20th)* (1970) (Korzhavin 2008).

Conclusion

Generally speaking, the current situation regarding political discourse in Russia is noticeably different from that of the 1990s and the 2000s, when the ruling elite sought to distance themselves from the Soviet language (see Ryazanova-Clarke, this volume), while the left-wing opposition employed it enthusiastically, chiefly in forms which had arisen during the Civil War and the Second World War. It appears that today, the left-wing opposition is gradually losing the desire to reproduce Soviet linguistic patterns. At the same time, the language of the ruling elite, particularly the 'hard line' of them including Vladimir Putin, while remaining lexically and stylistically distinct from Soviet language, is beginning to acquire a functional resemblance with Soviet rhetoric relating to the hunting down of conspiracies and the unification of all citizens loyal to the president into an integrated whole (Ken 2004; Tikhomirova 2005: 168–181; Chechel 2013).

Besides these two linguo-political processes we can observe a third process – particularly typical of 2000s – an increase in Stalinist attitudes among young people who came of age after the end of the Soviet era. These new Stalinists are by no means always left wing in their political orientation; more often than not they are extreme right-wing supporters of imperialism and state paternalism. As in the texts of the Labour Russia and the RKRП, Stalin becomes, for them, the symbol of some imaginary compensation for the sense of historical loss and of equally imaginary revenge on all whom they consider enemies – the United States, the West as a whole, foreigners, Islamists, Mikhail Gorbachev, Boris Yeltsin and so on. However, this rhetoric is now less and less associated with the idea of social justice, and more and more with the concept of military might and tough pragmatism in the spirit of rhetoric of *Realpolitik*. As for the left-wing rhetoric, it drifts ever further away from its Stalinist discursive models. This shift is indicative, too, of the fact that Soviet political language is undergoing a more and more obvious process of decomposition, this notion referring not only the genuine Soviet language of the 1960s and 1970s, still preserved in the memory of the older generation, but also to the artificial 'Second World War' language reconstructed by neo-Stalinists during the period of *perestroika* (1985–1991) (Guseinov 2012: 183–192; Kukulin 2013).

The various processes of semantic erosion which can now be observed each have their own distinct socio-political impact. The discourse used by Russia's

current ruling elite, with its Soviet overtones, and the discourse of the new 'revanchist Stalinists' both contribute to a schism in society which prevents dialogue between different groups (Rogov 2013: 119–123). On the other hand, the language currently used by 'dialogic' left-wingers could contribute to communication between different opposition groups and the working out of a more 'open' language in left-wing politics, which could, in future, become an important element in public life.

(Translated by Rose France)

Notes

- 1 In March 2014, Russia annexed from Ukraine the real Crimean peninsula, providing further evidence for this statement.
- 2 Gasan Guseinov defines the ideologeme as the 'minimum meaningful unit', expressing, in concentrated form, the experience of existence [of a subject] in an ideological society (Guseinov 2004: 13, for a more detailed discussion see *ibid.*: 26–36).
- 3 Since 2011, this organization has been called the Leninist Young Communist League of the Russian Federation (LYCL RF); however, its former name is currently still used in the title of its Internet site: www.skmrf.ru/ (accessed 11 April 2014).
- 4 United Russia is not a political party. It is a *crowd of fat cats* [literally *money bags: denezhnye meshki*] who have *wormed their way* into power through *use of the administrative resource*. It has *monopolized* the country's legislative power and passes one *anti-popular (antinarodnyi)* law after another. These laws *suppress the civil activity* of the population, *reinforce social inequality* and, *quite simply, rob the people*.
Thanks to these gentlemen, the United Russianists, the Russian Federation has become a *totalitarian and bureaucratic state* without a binding Constitution.
Typographical errors in the text have been corrected and emphasis has been added – I.K.
- 5 According to David Feldman and Mikhail Odesskii, this usage dates back to the rhetoric of the Jacobins during the French Revolution (Odesskii and Feldman 1994: 160).
- 6 The term 'totalitarianism' has been the subject of vigorous debate in social history and political philosophy since the 1980s, a debate initiated above all by so-called revisionist historians (Bergman 1998; De Kesel 2004; Grieder 2007; Geyer and Fitzpatrick 2009 and others). I believe that this term remains relevant, with a number of qualifications such as those described, for example, in Grieder's article.
- 7 Dear comrade deputy so and so! Up until now, any Government *backed by foreign bayonets*, has been called a *puppet government* in the Soviet press, and *foreign bayonets* have been referred to as *the bayonets of interventionists*. Today the Hungarian government is relying on Soviet bayonets, as can be seen even from Soviet sources of information, and the Soviet army in Hungary *is waging war against a section of the Hungarian public*. In order that neither Soviet people nor foreigners should form the opinion that the Hungarian Government is a *puppet government*, and the Soviet Union *an interventionist force* and in order to preserve the prestige of the Soviet Union, I call on you at the nearest session of the Supreme Council to demand from the Soviet Government the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary. Furthermore, I call on you to demand the passing of legislation that will prevent the further use of Soviet troops abroad without the special sanction of the Supreme Council or the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet.

Pimenov includes this letter in his memoirs, together with his correspondence with the Soviet surgeon and academician Aleksandr Bakulev, the only member of the Supreme Soviet who replied to his letter.

- 8 Here I am based on the results of unpublished research by the St Petersburg anthropologist Daria Dimke (forthcoming).
- 9 Please note, however, that there are other statements made in this article (concerning 'liberal fascism' and 'fascist liberalism') with which I do not agree.
- 10 See also: Shavshukova 1998; Insarov 2002. However, after the publication of the above book, Marlen Insarov shifted to a nationalist standpoint. See, for example, his speech to the political conference, 'What shall we do about Nationalism?' held in Kiev in 2011 and available at: <http://komuna.org.ua/?p=523> (accessed 18 December 2013). In addition, see his substantial unsigned piece on the website for the International Workers' Organizations: 'Nationalism as a drug: the "National-Revolutionary" camp in modern Russia', available at: www.aitrus.info/node/2750 (accessed 18 December 2013).
- 11 Emphasis as in the original.
- 12

COMRADE! The bourgeois won't be put off
by tearful entreaties
If you want anything serious,
YOU MUST BEAT THE BOURGEOIS!
Enough of making verbal lace
By weaving lies and fear
ONLY
HOLY
COURAGE
CAN
SAVE
THE COUNTRY NOW!
Once more Aleksandr Matrosov
THE MOTHERLAND INTO BATTLE IS CALLING!
Loyal,
betrayed,
abandoned:
THE PEOPLE WAIT FOR STALIN!

The poem is dated 2 October 1993. It was subsequently put to music by the 'bard' from the CPRE, Aleksandr Kharchikov, who is still performing it live today.

- 13 Compare, for example, 'In *Pravda* crazy people are urging on with cries of "Beat the bourgeois, beat the Kaledinites!"' (Gorkii 1918: 78).
- 14 Today, there will be no trust solely to words, solely to banners and solely to slogans. Today trust will be placed with real deeds, real nuggets of experience related to our attempts to protect young people. Then people will believe us and our values.
- 15 Which workers actually benefit from Putin's rule? [...] Take the Urals Railcar Manufacturing Factory. [...] Its chief product is tanks. [...] Almost all of them are sent for export. And so the workers of Uralvagonzavod [...] don't work for Russia but for other countries. And the salaries they receive for their work are, in fact, paid by foreign customers (or, more precisely, from Russian taxpayers' money, received by foreign customers as credit for the purchase of arms, which is even worse). [...]

At a meeting [...] in the Kuzbass, Putin promised miners to increase coal production by 30% [...] and, according to the pro-Government media, all miners responded by unanimously speaking in support of Putin. [...]

Coal is the most environmentally dirty fuel, and energetically unprofitable. In addition, coal is the most hazardous energy industry. [...] To make this sort of promise to the miners means to promise them to maintain and even increase the gap between Russia and civilized countries. [...] Every rally [of ours] should end with the creation of an organized body of people willing to continue the struggle for the establishment of a workers' Soviet power.

And the people of *Rus* will stand in the ranks,
 And go with us to the fight
 Sasha Nevskii and San'ka Matrosov
 And Korchagin, and Dmitri Donskoi.
 [...]

 And I swear by the memory of the fallen:
 The enemy will not escape retribution.
 Above me unfurls the flag
 Of all the saints, who have shone over *Rus*.

- 17 See the reproduction at www.wikipaintings.org/ru/kukryniksy/splendidly-and-desperately-do-we-fight-the-issue-of-suvorov-and-chapayev-do-it-all-right-1941 (accessed 18 December 2013). This type of rhetoric had already become part of Soviet propaganda in the pre-war years (see, for example, Vishnevskii 1938: 152).
- 18 In the poem Aleksandr Nevskii is called Sasha Nevskii; the young heroes of Soviet propaganda would often be referred to in this way, using informal, shortened forms of their first names (Pavka Korchagin for Pavel Korchagin, Pavlik Morozov for Pavel Morozov, and so on). There is no tradition in Russian culture of calling saints – or saint princes for that matter, by the shortened version of their names: this phenomenon is a specific development of post-Soviet language.
- 19 Another version of this text referred to Elizaveta Chaikina (in propagandist texts she was usually called Liza Chaikina), the partisan and young communist murdered by the Nazis in 1941, posthumously awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.
- 20 For more detailed information, see, for example, Doklad 2013.
- 21 Leading positions in the regional protest movement have been taken up by our comrades from the left-front in Altai, Izhevsk, Tiumen', Ivanovo, Kaliningrad and Orenburg. Moscow and Petersburg are vigilant, and our comrades from Siberia and from along the Volga are bracing themselves for action. The Vanguard of Red Youth (AKM) too, has found its rightful place in this company.
- 22 The urgent task of the left is to create its own council in every city, which will attract workers who have been made redundant, members of genuine trade unions [that is to say, really independent trade unions, not part of the pro-government Federation of Independent Trade Unions in Russia – I.K.], outraged motorists, *restless* environmentalists, *resolute* housing activists and many others. And we need to put all our efforts into achieving this, starting on 1 January 2009. (Emphasis added – I.K.)
- 23 The interviewer is not named.
- 24 Our biggest mistake is our eternal love for a state which doesn't exist. Like the ghost of a dead wife, the state of the past does not allow us to go on with our lives. It does not allow us to build anything new, to make or to create anything. Like the husband of a woman who has died, all we want is to restore our non-reimbursable loss. We do not want to, we cannot start to look for a new love. We create a party modelled after the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, we breed bureaucracy, we form countless committees and commissions, clogging up our brains. We are touched by those countries where the embers of socialism still smoulder, we read about them and think about them, instead of thinking how to improve our own situation. We do not want to be kept up to date – we aim to recreate the old, bring a corpse back to life, or to get as close to this as we can. We don't understand that we are seeing a new age, that a new life is being lived and that people are thinking differently. We are the most flabby and obsolete movement in politics. Even more flabby than the monarchists!
- 25 For Marx, Ancient Greek civilization was 'the childhood of humanities', a stage 'never to be repeated' (Marks 1958 [1857]: 738).

- 26 This takes us back to the dark days of the Middle Ages, when devastating religious wars were fought in order to destroy heretics and infidels.
- 27 Only Marx's philosophical materialism showed the proletariat a way out of the state of spiritual slavery in which, until now, all the oppressed classes had languished.

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